NEW

THE TRAVELLER'S GUIDE TO
PARANORMAL BRITAIN

OVER 150 GHOST-HUNTING HOTSPOTS

BEASTS OF OLD BLIGHTY

FROM BLACK SHUCK TO THE MONSTER OF LOCH NESS

ROYAL REVENANTS

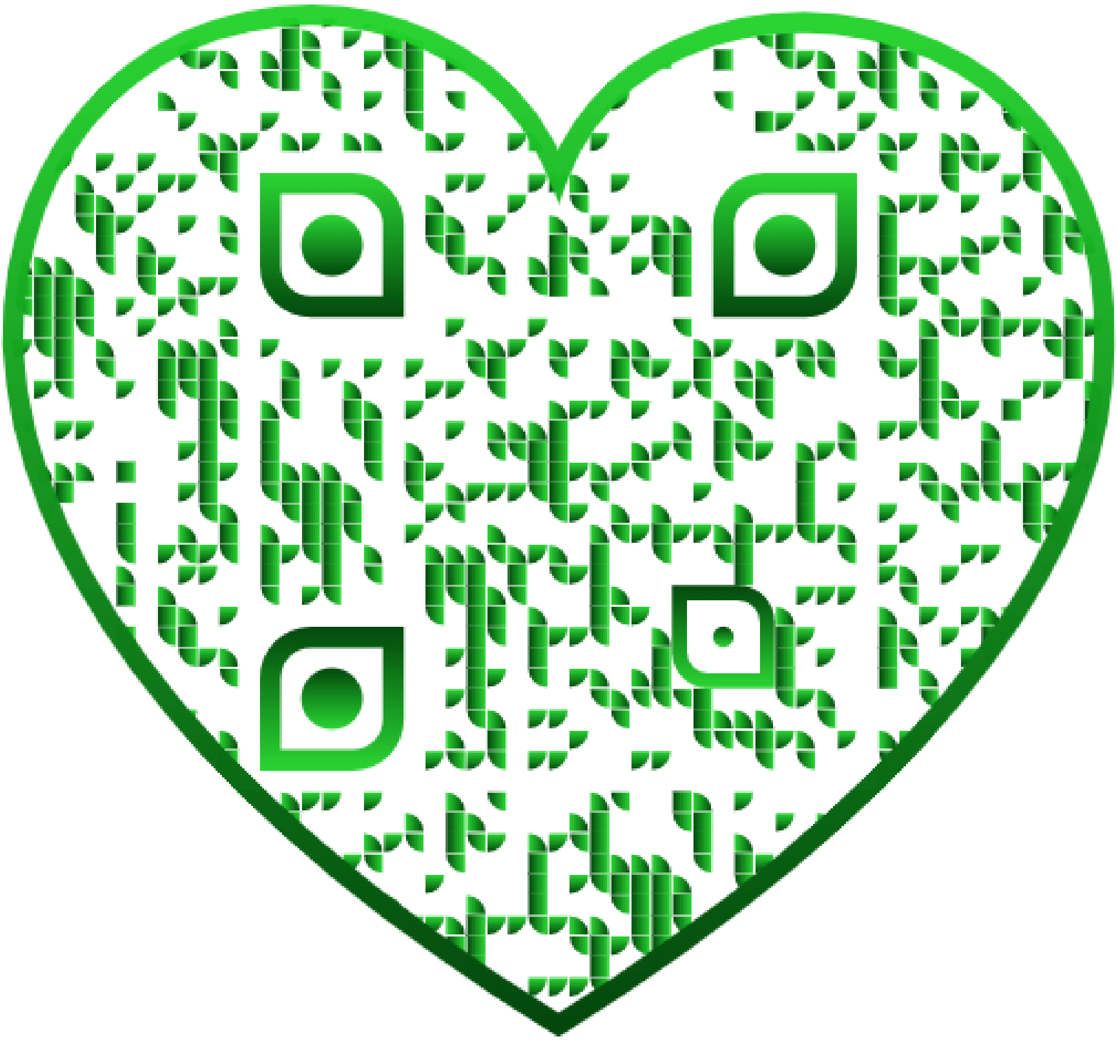
SEEK OUT THE SPIRITS OF KING HENRY VIII'S ILL-FATED WIVES

YOUR TICKET TO THE UK'S SCARIEST HAUNTS

GRAVEYARD GHOULS | CREEPY CASTLES | FOLKLORE PHANTOMS | EERIE ENCOUNTERS

Digital Edition

FUTURE
FIRST EDITION



ORKNEY-IS
Mainland
Stronsa
Kirkwall
Pentland Firth
Dunnet Hd
Wick
Caithness
Sutherland
Moray Firth
Peterhead
Fraserburgh
Kinnaird Hd
Aberdeen
Stonehaven
Montrose
Arbroath
Firth of Tay
DUNDEE
Forfar
Perth
Firth of Forth
Inverness
Cromarty
Ross
SKYE
Butt of Lewis
Stornoway
WESTERN - IS
North Minch
Little Minch
HEBRIDEN
S. Kilda
Coll
Tiree
Mull
Firth of Lorn
Colonsay
Jura
Argyle
Bute
Cantire
Rathlin
Antrim
Belfast
Londonderry
ULSTER
Tyrone
Donegal
Fermanagh
Leitrim
Malin Hd
Lough Swilly
Bloody Foreland
Tory I.
Sligo
NEWCASTLE
Northumberland
Durham
Carlisle
Cumberland
Whitehaven
N O R D
O Z E A N

WELCOME

With so many folks traipsing through this unassuming island for such a significant length of time, it's no surprise that Britain has more than its fair share of ghosts. Remaining continuously occupied and bearing witness to the arrivals and departures of a wealth of various peoples for over 12,000 years, the United Kingdom is a uniquely multicultural nation teeming with legend and lore, magical and mystical energies, restless spirits and superstition. There's a story to tell on every street, you just need to know where to look. *The Traveller's Guide to Paranormal Britain* is the essential guide to what lurks in the shadows of this illustrious isle. Discover the ancient groves of the druids, the alchemical lairs of arcane Elizabethan sorcerers and the haunts of the Victorian high magicians. Get to know some of the eldritch creatures and legendary phantoms who still roam the British countrysides, occupy its villages, frequent its towns and even hide amongst the hustle and bustle of the UK's busiest modern metropolises…

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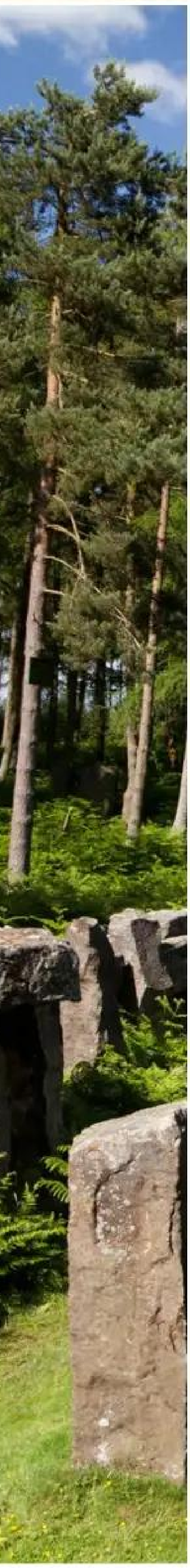

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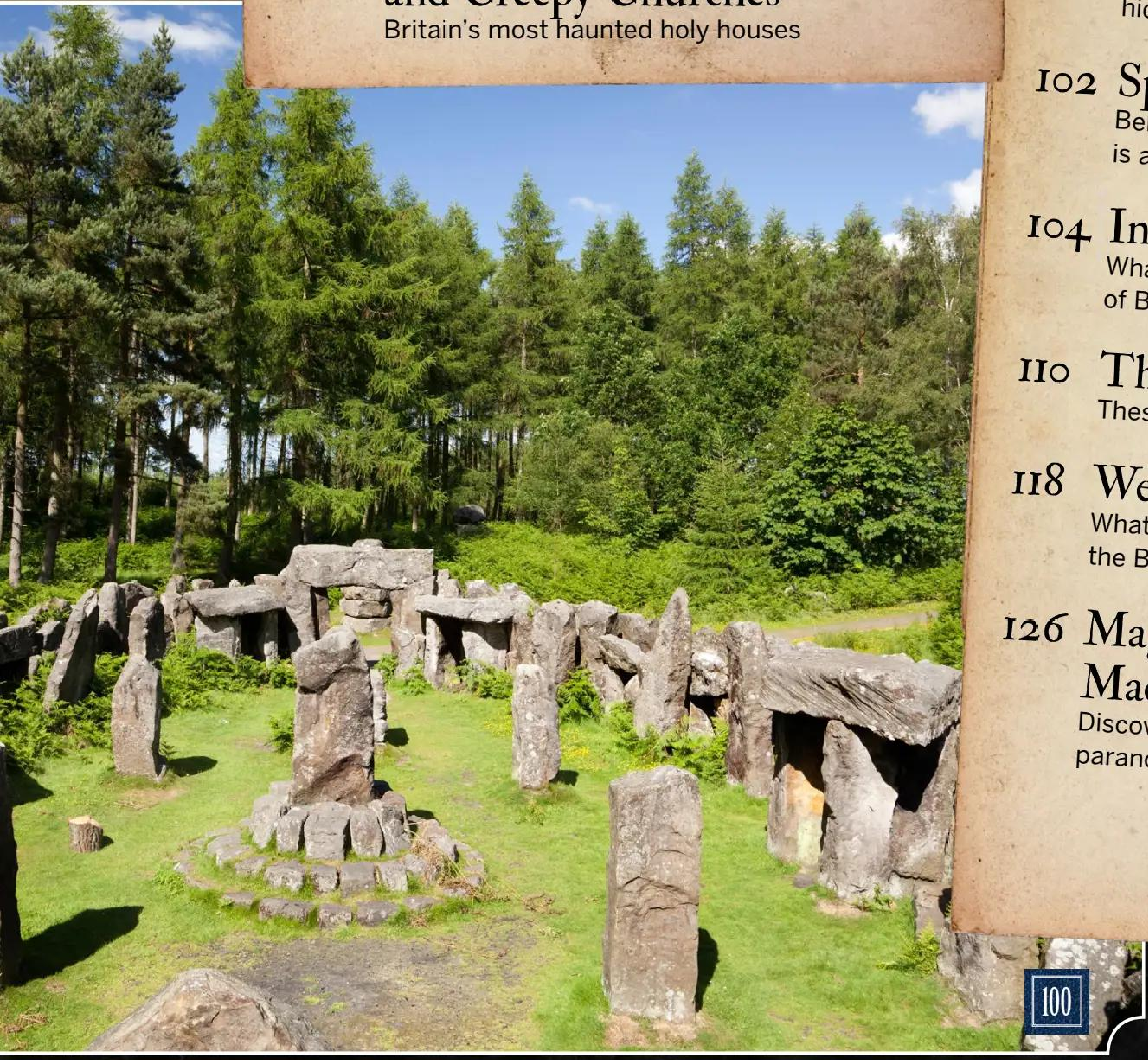
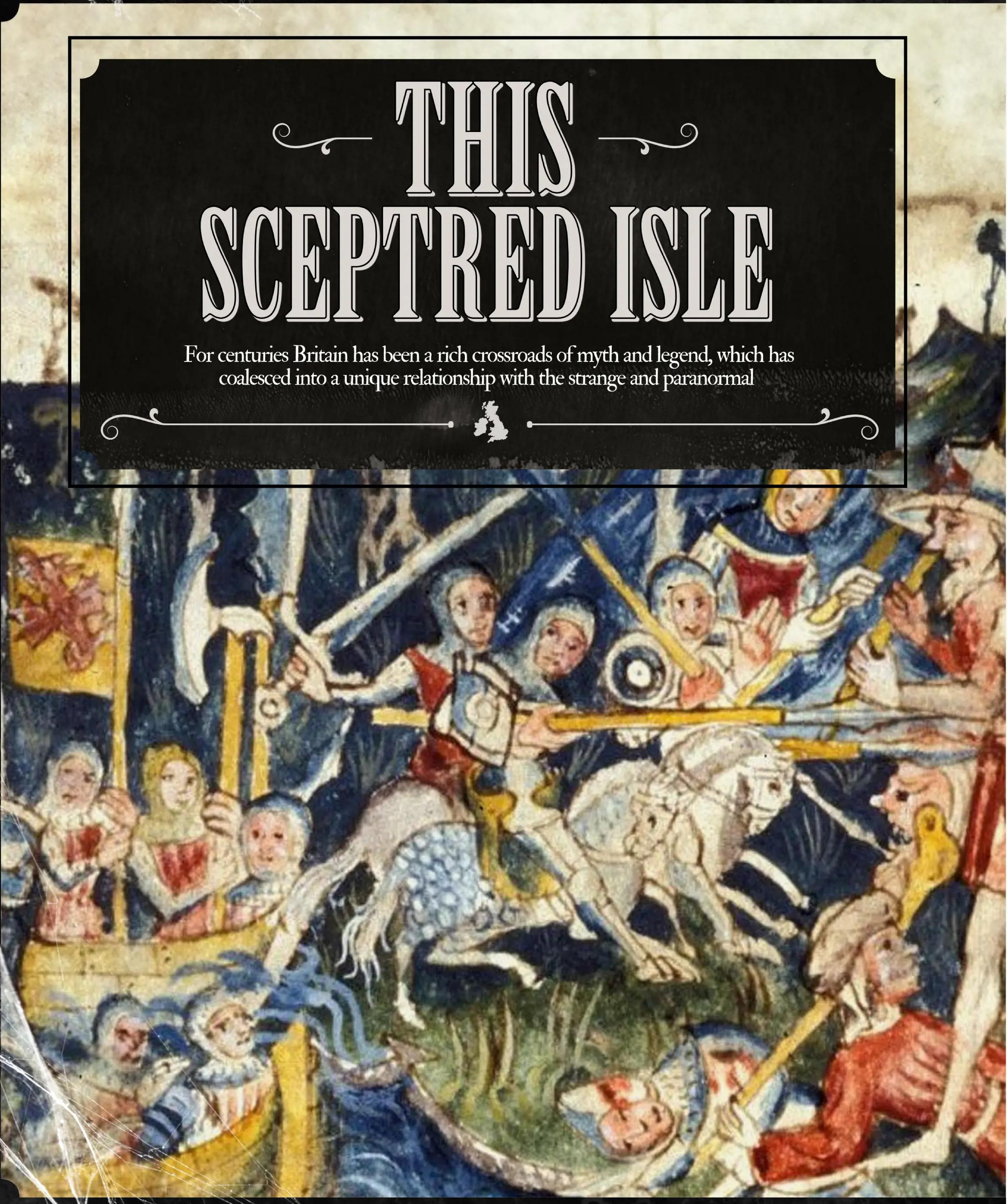


THIS SCEPTRED ISLE

For centuries Britain has been a rich crossroads of myth and legend, which has coalesced into a unique relationship with the strange and paranormal



The British Isles, lying as they do on the fractured edge of Western Europe, beguiled the ancient continental imagination for centuries. Out in the west – the direction of the Otherworld in Celtic thought – further out by far than the Iberian peninsula the Romans named Finisterre, the End of the World, all that lay beyond them was the god-haunted land of Hibernia (Ireland) and then leagues of trackless sea leading off into the green flash of sunset. Who knows what strange rites the folk of these ancient isles got up to in the ages of stone, when they raised their inexplicable monoliths and circles to the sun and stars?

Up until the Bronze Age, when the tin that laced the veins of the land became a precious resource for the technologically advanced civilisations of the Near East, the rest of the world largely passed Britain by. Then, for a little while, these out-of-the-way islands became an important stop on the tin trade route that led from the heart of the Mediterranean to the western reaches. As a consequence, they began to acquire their own trappings of wealth, commerce, and international cultural trends. However, the mysterious Late Bronze Age Collapse of the 12th century BCE changed all of that. The fall of the Near Eastern empires and city-states that had come to rely on Britain's tin precipitated socio-cultural crashes and mass migrations on a phenomenal scale throughout Europe and beyond, changing the fabric of ancient British society irrevocably.

ANCIENT ALBION AND BRUTAL BRITAIN

Early medieval British literature preserves folk memories of these ancient migrations in its tales of the founding of Britain. In the story of Albina – who gave her name to the land's ancient name, Albion – the titular princess and her 29 sisters are the daughters of an eastern king. Albina and her sisters don't want to marry the husbands picked out by their royal father, so conspire to murder them. When, like a dark version of the tale of the 'Twelve Dancing Princesses', the flustered youngest sister accidentally reveals the plot to the court, the women are set aboard a ship and sent out into the empty western ocean to find exile or death. They find neither, instead coming across an island, which they settle on and name after their eldest sister, now queen. They are not alone on the island of Albion, though: it's populated with handsome and seductive incubi (male demons) whom the princesses infinitely prefer to their late and unlamented husbands. Together, princesses and demons populate the land with a race of giants. But where are they now?

Another story has the answer, and it has its roots in both Homer's ancient Greek epic,

THE CELTIC REVIVAL

The Victorian high magicians who reintroduced Britain to her magical past

The Victorians were obsessed with ghosts, life after death, and ancient powers, but unlike the ancient Britons they couldn't simply graft the heroes of ancient Roman epics onto their mythos and call it history. But they shied away from their Germanic, Saxon heritage too, thanks to Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II. While he was Queen Victoria's eldest grandson, his behaviour on the world stage made him both the black sheep of the family and indeed the international community.

Instead, the magical practitioners of groups such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Fraternity of Inner Light, influenced by Irish members of their cohort like poet WB Yeats, looked to the Celtic pantheon for esoteric inspiration. They found it instead in Arthurian myth. Reclaiming this from the chivalrous tales of the Normans, King Arthur, his knights, and their faerie consorts were reimagined again as a mystical link between Britain and the fantastical past of the legendary land of Atlantis. Arthur became connected to the ancient figure of Herne the Hunter, the Horned God of modern Pagan belief; Morgan Le Fay to the White Goddess of Robert Graves's book of the same name, a name that signifies the moon and has been used both for the legendary founder of Albion – Albina – and for the Triple Goddess of modern Paganism. This connection has gone on to influence and inform modern Pagan belief, especially in the UK.

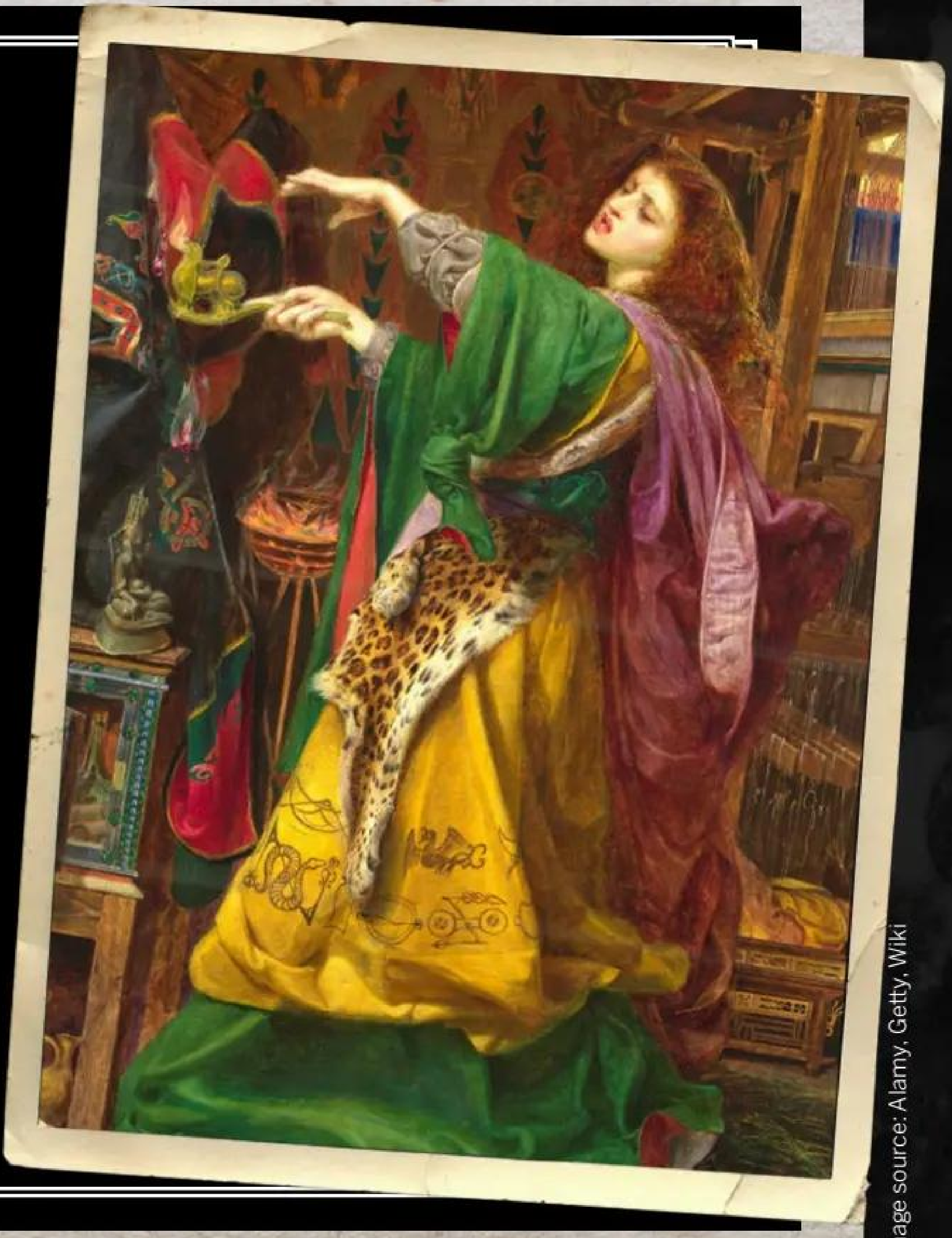
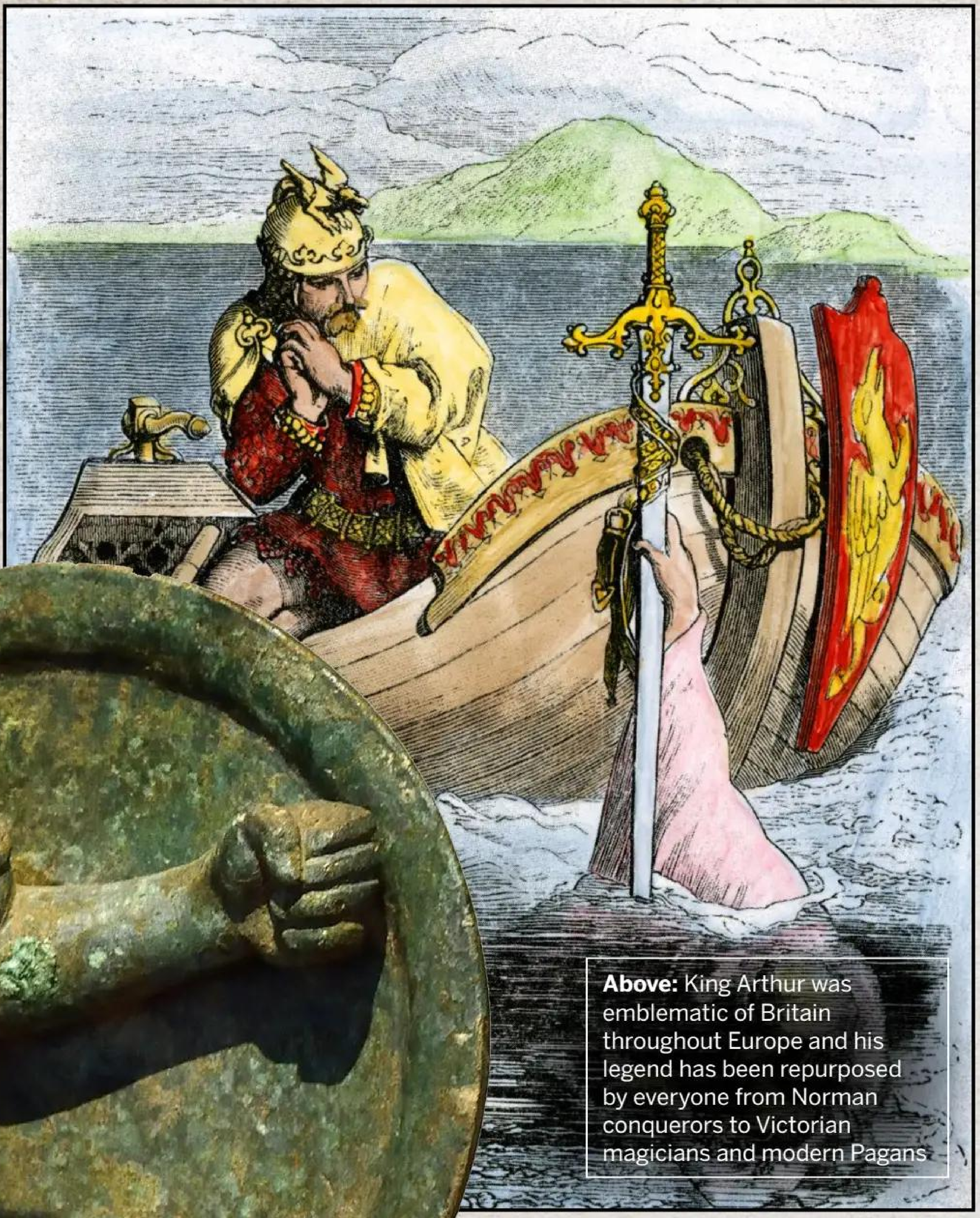
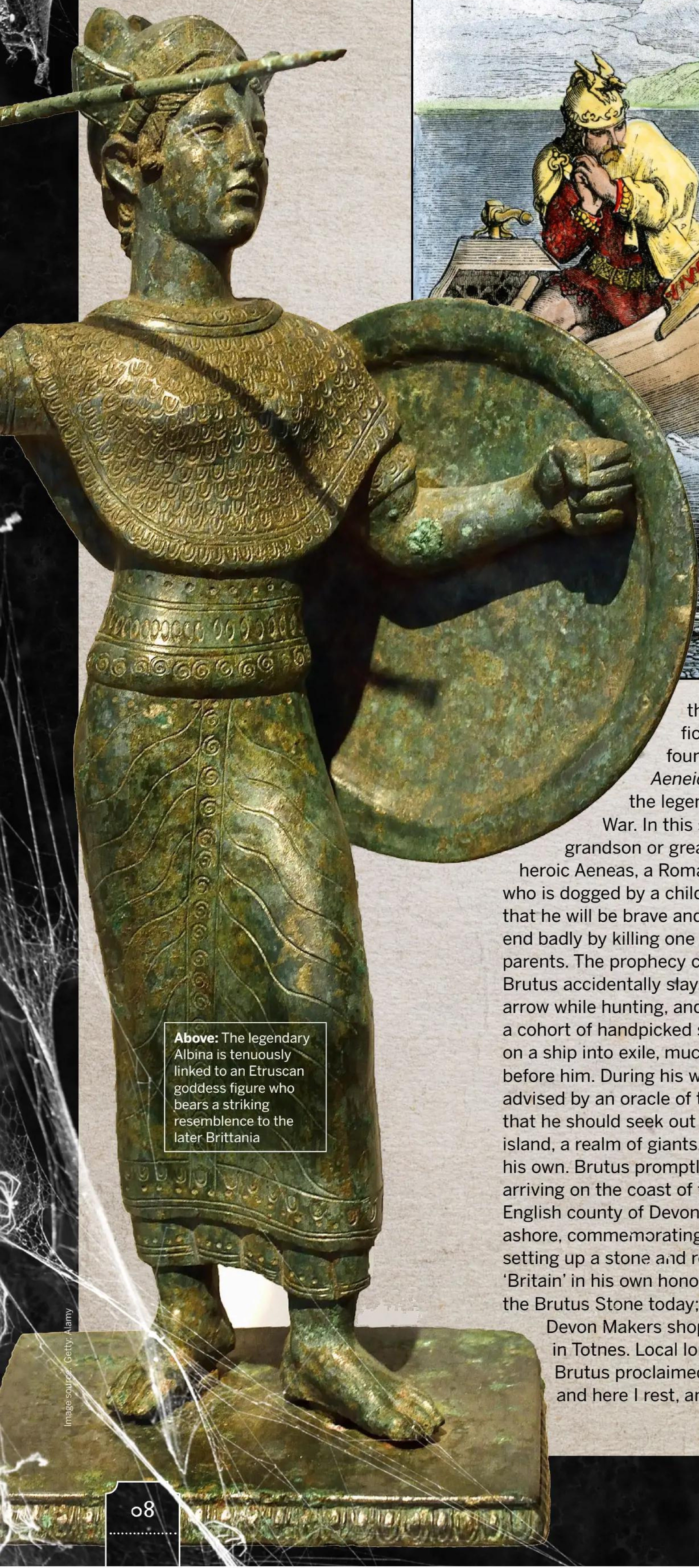


Image source: Alamy, Getty, Wiki



Above: King Arthur was emblematic of Britain throughout Europe and his legend has been repurposed by everyone from Norman conquerors to Victorian magicians and modern Pagans



Above: The legendary Albina is tenuously linked to an Etruscan goddess figure who bears a striking resemblence to the later Brittania

Image source: Getty, Alamy

the *Iliad*, and Ovid's fictionalised Roman foundation myth, the *Aeneid*, both based in the legend of the Trojan War. In this story, Brutus is the grandson or great-grandson of the heroic Aeneas, a Romano-Trojan prince who is dogged by a childhood prophecy that he will be brave and beloved, but will end badly by killing one or both of his parents. The prophecy comes true when Brutus accidentally slays his father with an arrow while hunting, and he, together with a cohort of handpicked soldiers, is sent out on a ship into exile, much as Albina was before him. During his wanderings he is advised by an oracle of the goddess Diana that he should seek out a distant western island, a realm of giants, and claim it for his own. Brutus promptly sets out to do so, arriving on the coast of the southwestern English county of Devon, where he goes ashore, commemorating his landing by setting up a stone and renaming Albion 'Britain' in his own honour. You can visit the Brutus Stone today; it's outside the Devon Makers shop at 51 Fore Street in Totnes. Local lore has it that Brutus proclaimed "Here I stand, and here I rest, and this good town shall be called Totnes" as he set it in place, which is a wonderful little bit of rhyme from a Turkish-Italian princeling, especially considering the English language hadn't even been invented yet.

CULTURAL CROSSROADS

Immigration, both imagined and real, would continue to make Britain into a melting pot of myth and legend. The real early immigrants to the British Isles were the Celts, who moved westward in bands across Europe, bringing with them their distinctive art styles, elaborate legal system, and pantheon of nature gods whose rites were led by the formidable Druid priesthood. Clashing with and finally absorbing the Picts of northern Britain, it was the Celts, realised from the yoke of Rome in the 5th century, who first began to tell the legends of Britain's great king, Arthur, his band of powerful warriors, and the earth goddesses who watched over them. In Arthur's earliest myths he is driving off the Saxons, whose arrival in Britain would bring Germanic ghost beliefs – a uniquely lonely outlook on spirituality that suited life in these distant isles – and the elemental Norse gods. But they didn't stay long: while Christianity had been known in Roman Britain since the 4th

Below: The mysterious remnants of the ancient British landscape have fuelled centuries of speculation about its hidden past

century, in the 6th the now predominantly Anglo-Saxon country was visited by St Augustine, who set about converting its pagan inhabitants. He succeeded: by the time the first Viking incursions targeted Britain, the followers of the Norse gods were attacking a Christian nation.

In France one particular band of northmen had also converted to Christianity, and been awarded a duchy in the northwest of the country in the hope of keeping them out of trouble. It didn't. In 1066 the Normans conquered Britain, and while they attempted to stamp out Anglo-Saxon and latent Celtic belief, in reality their Norman-French dialect was absorbed into the local language, while their love of hero-tales soon absorbed and transformed King Arthur in turn. Now the Celtic warriors were chivalrous knights and their chthonic consorts were faerie maidens; beautiful but capricious, otherworldly, and unchristian. The English royal house of Plantagenet had as its founding myth the story of Mélusine, a half-faerie queen cursed with the lower body of a dragonish serpent. King Arthur's greatest adversary was now not the Saxon horde but his wicked sister Morgan Le Fay, who despite her black arts was believed to have rescued the dying Arthur to preserve his life in her faerie kingdom of Avalon at the end of his last battle, giving rise to the legend that the great king will ride once more to Britain's aid in her hour of need.

A UNIQUE WORLDVIEW

From the complexities of medieval Britain a hodge-podge of myth now began to coalesce into a metaphysical worldview that would influence British spirituality and superstition for centuries. From the Celts and Romans came the spirits of place that watched over the landscape and healed its people, like London's Lud. From the Saxons came the ghosts that walked the lonely hills, and the old gods who could be called upon in magic spells. From the Christians came the saints who could intercede with God on behalf of the faithful. Christians also provided the demonology of the medieval world. It's unsurprising that the magical arts proved popular in Britain; would-be wizards and witches have a wealth of patrons and guides to call upon. It's no surprise either that Britain has continued to function as a conduit for the paranormal: centuries of belief have imbued the land with such overloaded layers of metaphysical meaning that many believe it now spills over erratically into the hauntings and fortean phenomena you will find on these pages…

SCRATCHING FANNY OF COCK LANE

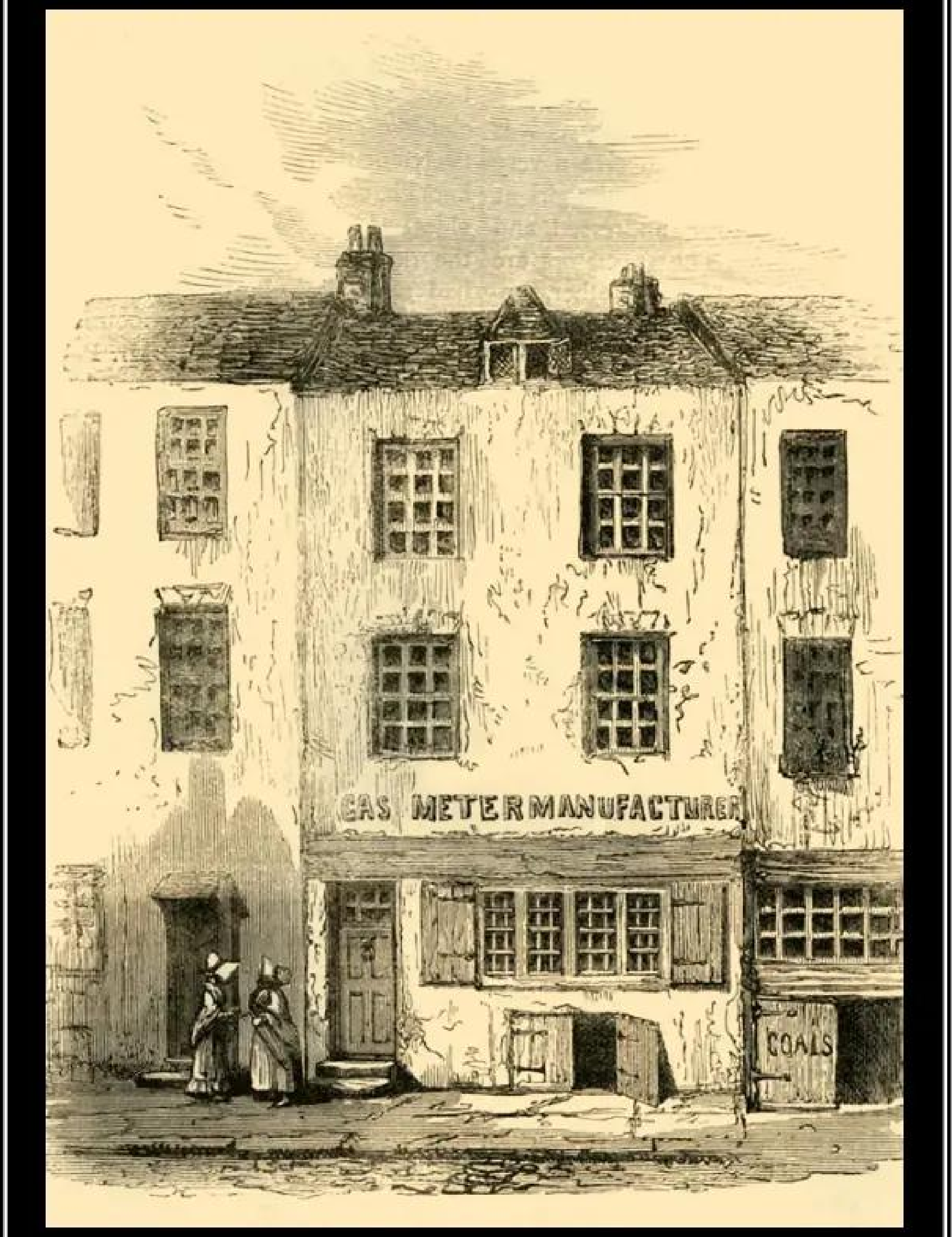
The nation became captivated by the ghost of a woman who claimed she was murdered by her husband in 1762

One of the most infamous ghosts of the 18th century in Britain was one that haunted Cock Lane in London. When William Kent's wife Elizabeth died, her sister Fanny moved into the family home to care for the widower. Soon the two became lovers and moved to Cock Lane to live as Mr and Mrs Kent in rooms rented from the Parsons family. When Fanny was pregnant and due to give birth, she suddenly fell ill and died. Her spirit would not rest for long.

The daughters of the Parsons family began to hear noises near their bed at night. Scratching, as if a cat was hidden in the walls, left the family troubled. Soon suspicion fell on the unquiet ghost of Fanny and the legend of Scratching Fanny was born. Devising a system of knocking to communicate with the spirit, the Parsons were able to find out that Fanny had not died from smallpox but rather a lethal dose of arsenic given to her by her 'husband'.

The great and good of London society began to attend séances to speak to Fanny's ghost. Close examination of Elizabeth Parsons discovered a piece of wood she used to make the knocking sounds. Kent brought the Parsons family to court for blackening his name. All were found guilty and forced to pay a fine for their imposture.

Despite being a hoax, the case brought attention to the role of the supernatural within Christian thought – particularly the differing beliefs between Anglicans and Methodists, whereby Anglicans had a long history of superstition and acceptance of the supernatural. Methodists, in contrast, often dismissed the existence of ghosts and the paranormal, staunch in their ideology of a fixed afterlife where spirits were either with god or within hell.



Above: The legacy of Cock Lane's 'ghost house' lived on in the works of numerous Victorian writers and artists

Image source: Getty; Alamy

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THE RISE OF HAUNTED TOURISM

Humans have a natural tendency towards the macabre and a curiosity that would kill a cat, leading to an insatiable appetite for the supernatural

Written by Alice Pattillo

Dark tourism is having a bit of a moment lately. You've probably heard the term thanks to the popular Netflix show, or perhaps through your favourite podcast. Dark tourism is generally defined as tourism to sites associated with death, tragedy and the macabre. The most famous dark tourism destinations include Auschwitz, Ground Zero and the Cambodian Killing Fields, but many dark tourists also enjoy exploring graveyards, catacombs and even castles, crossing over into haunted tourism and legend tripping. It is seemingly human nature to be fascinated by mankind's own morbid history, as seen through our obsession with true crime and box-office thrillers, seeking out only the most salacious historical events, and traffic jams caused by onlookers who can't help but take a peek at the car crash on the other side of the road. Our ancestors were similarly enthralled, if not more so, finding pleasure in gladiatorial games and flocking to witness the latest public execution. But it's not just death itself that spikes our interest (there's a reason why *Unsolved Mysteries* often ventures into the world of the paranormal!), it's the thrill of the unknown and the tales we tell ourselves. Many of these dark destinations hold very little to see, but it's the stories left in these spaces that spark our curiosity – the legend and lore associated with the place that draws us back, generation after generation.

Right: 1960s TV series *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* featured a young widowed writer who unwittingly rents a haunted house

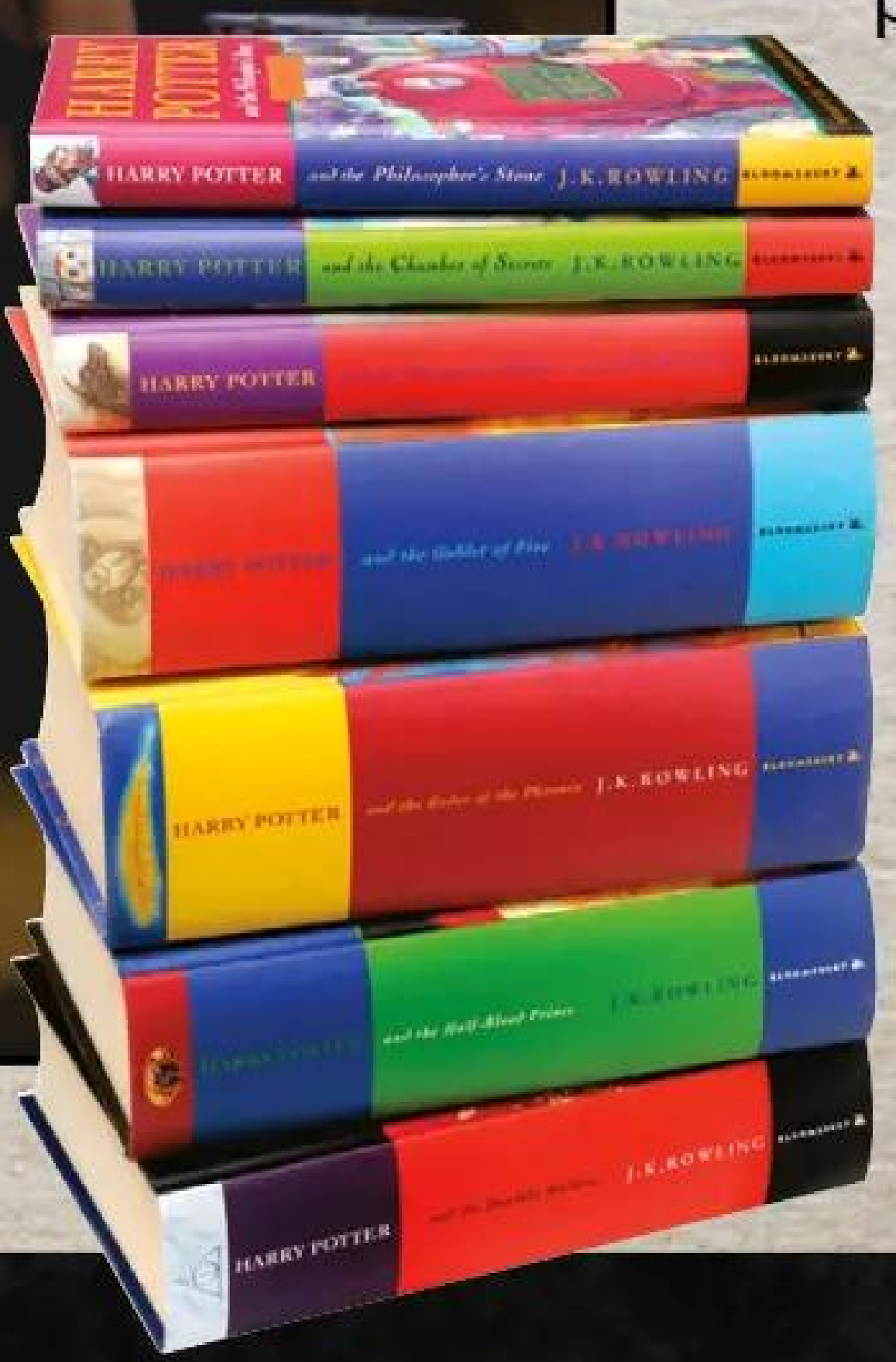
Bottom right: The alien-focused science fiction film *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* is one of the most successful movies of all time

Below: Studies show that subjecting yourself to a little risk and fear can help prevent mental health problems

FEAR FANDOM

Seeking out spooky sites and situations is not a new phenomenon; in fact humanity has been scaring the bejesus out of one another for millenia. Telling tales of spots where the undead have arisen from their graves, or warning others about the monsters lurking in deep, dark waters are not a new phenomenon, nor is the instinct to go see for ourselves. From tales of ghosts haunting bathhouses in the first century, and terrifying biblical demons, to modern day fear surrounding Satanic cults and terrifying little green men appearing from outer space, we have forever been not only afraid of but utterly obsessed with the things that go bump in the night.

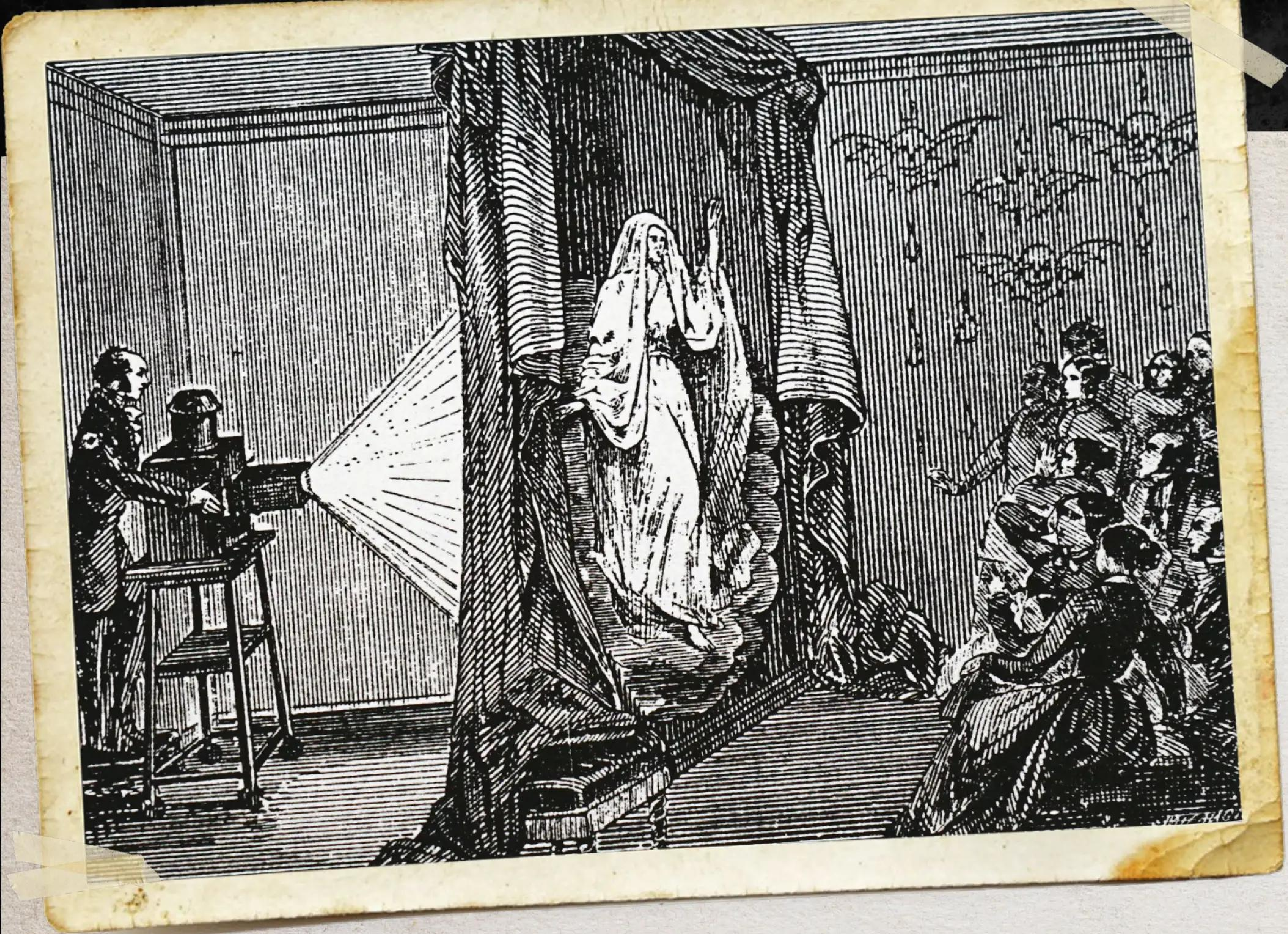
With so many imaginative stories of what could be hiding in the dark you'd think we actually enjoyed being scared... Well, it turns out we do. Studies have shown that fear gives us an adrenaline rush, and we are hardwired to crave and seek out releases of those feel-good hormones called endorphins – with a good horror movie leaving you feeling just as buzzed as a ten mile run. And if a book, tv show or movie can get our palms sweaty enough to feel satisfied, imagine what venturing into a real-life nightmare setting could do! Not only is feeling fright therapeutic, it is also addictive – just like the gym (or so they say...). We just can't get enough of scaring ourselves silly...



PARANORMAL POPULARITY

But it's not just fear that draws us to the supernatural, it offers an escape for many. Supernatural stories like *Harry Potter* and the *Twilight* saga are two of the most popular franchises in the world and some of the highest grossing films of all time include the paranormal, from *E.T.* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* to *Pirates of the Caribbean.* Outside of fiction, we are in the midst of a paranormal boom, with witchcraft reaching mainstream media and attention, and many Gen Zers claiming abilities from reading auras and divination to plant communication. Meanwhile, ghost tours have grown so popular almost every town has one. One study has shown that our fascination with ghosts can help us to talk about the taboo of death, and haunted attractions often tackle the subject in a light-hearted manner. Not only that, but folklore stories can help bring to life the history of a place, educating us as well as providing stimulating entertainment, and inspiring many to take an interest in history.

Image source: Redvers at English Wikipedia



LEGEND TRIPPING

Legend Tripping is essentially a supernatural pilgrimage and one of the oldest and most culturally ingrained forms of haunted, or dark, tourism. In fact, haunted tourism is legend tripping. And chances are, even if you haven't set out to do it, you did it as a child. Remember when kids would dare each other to knock on the door of that eerie old house at the end of the street? Or make the journey down to the railway tracks where some poor youth allegedly lost his life? Writer Bill Ellis defines legend tripping as "an excursion to places where something uncanny has allegedly occurred with the intention of experiencing something supernatural". These places are usually creepy destinations that have been shrouded in lore for centuries, oftentimes they are cemeteries, bridges, caves, woods, or even houses. Attached to the spot is a local warning, perhaps the story of a victim who dared question the legend's credibility and met an unfortunate end. Legend tripping is perhaps the oldest form of tourism, too. A cave in Yorkshire, England, is the country's oldest tourist attraction – and it is all because of its legend: A real life witch and water that "petrifies" objects has captivated visitors since the 17th century (see more on page 94).

SIMULATED SPIRITS

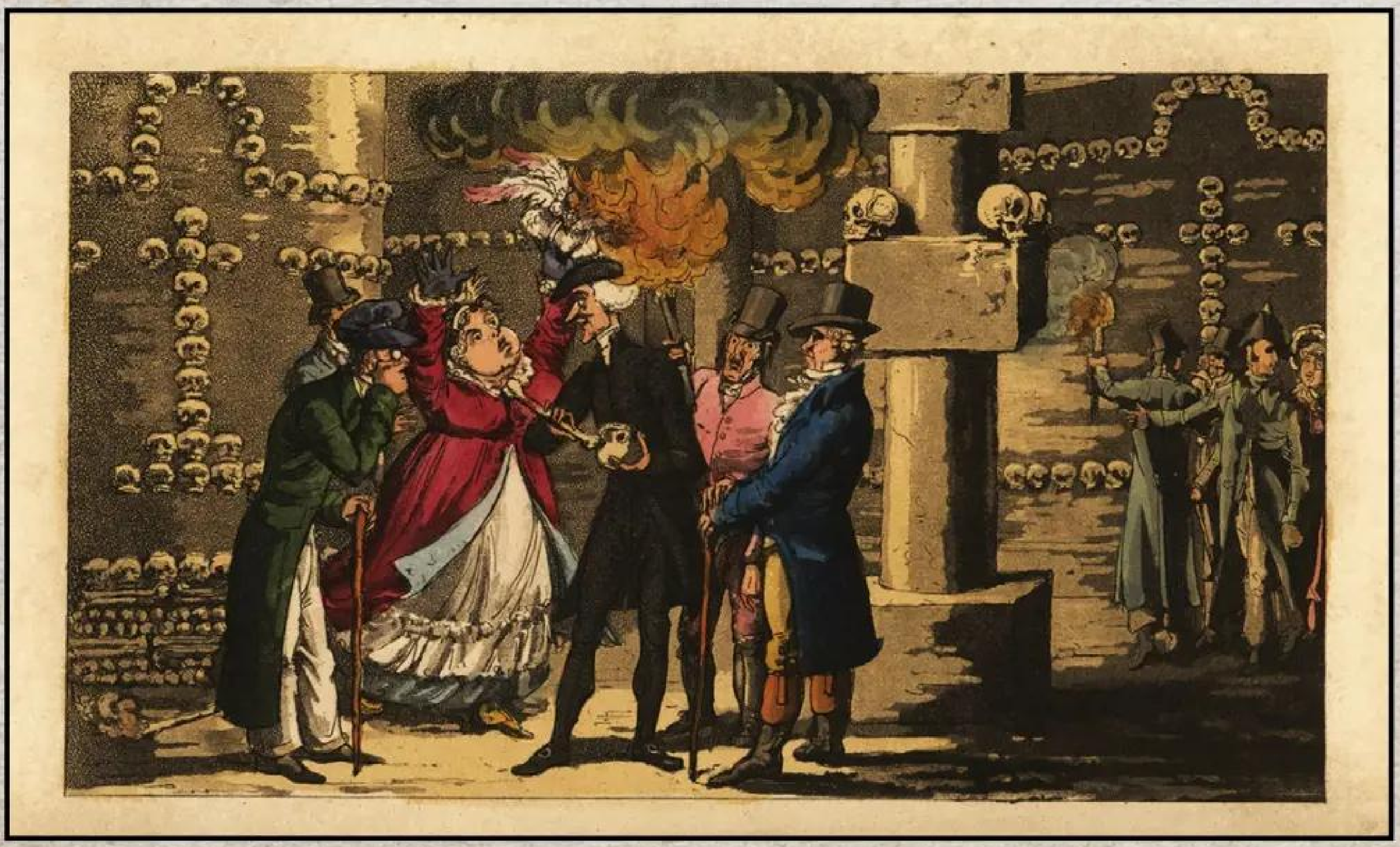
During the 19th century, appetites for spooky tourism reached its peak. The rise of spiritualism had audiences flooding to seances – while many were believed to be real, many others were later admitted to have been faked – as well as ghost story recitals and performances by magicians and psychics. People began seeking out spirits for themselves armed with new technology – photography. The establishment of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882 only cemented the fact that interest in the paranormal was considerable.

Savvy entertainers saw an opportunity to capitalise, leading to the rise of haunted attractions, such as the Orton and Spooner Ghost House, which opened in 1915 in Liphook, England. But these simulated frights were more akin to a fairground ride or the

Top: An illustration of a phantasmogoria or magic lantern show in the 17th century

Left: The Black Angel monument in Oakland Cemetary, Iowa, is the subject of many a legend trip – kiss her lips and you are sure to die, unless you are a virgin

Right: An 1820 cartoon of an English couple mistaking the flaming torch of a Paris Catacombs tourguide for a ghost



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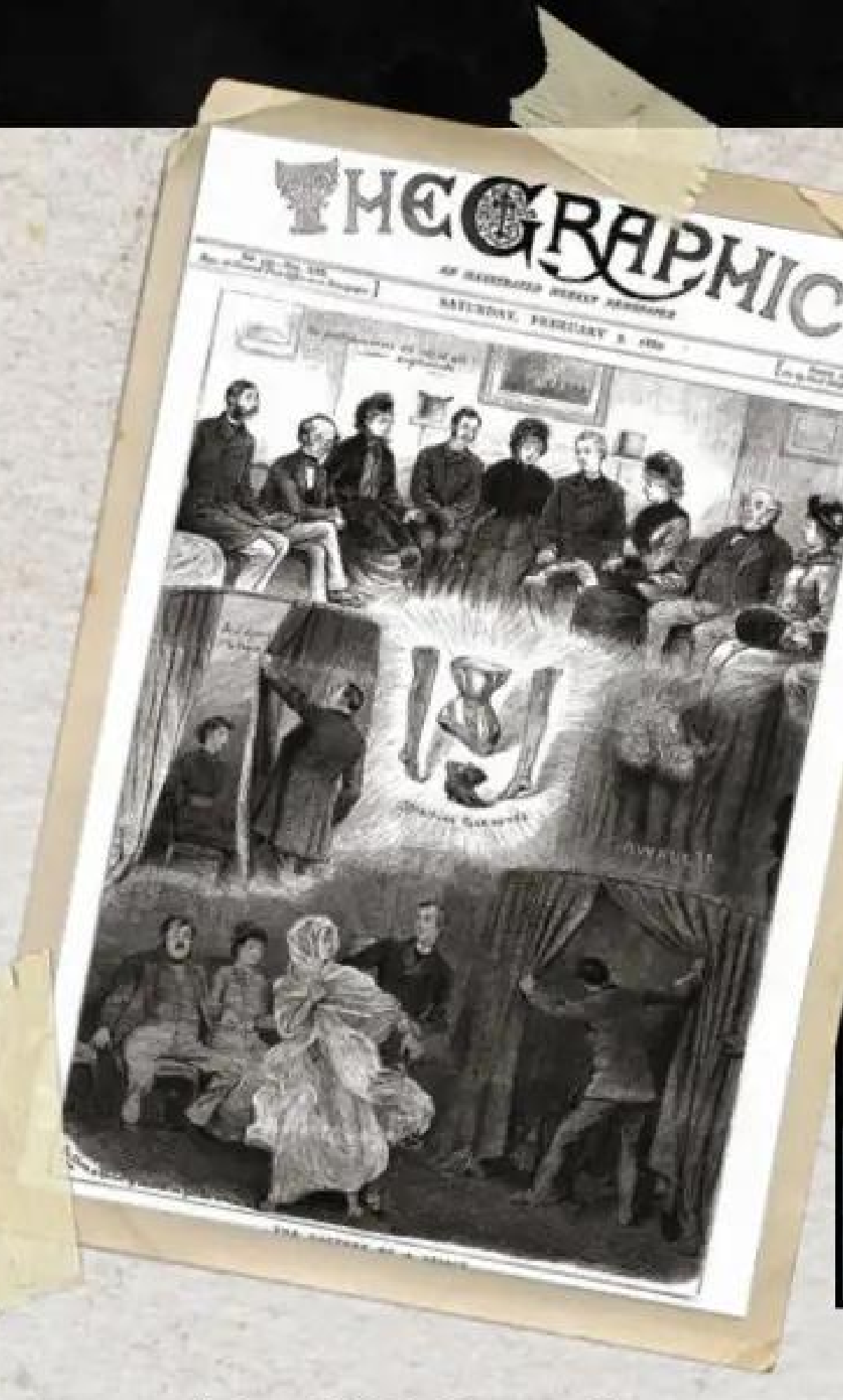
earlier Phantasmogoria shows (an early form of immersive horror entertainment using magic lanterns and sensory simulation, often involving drugs and electric shocks) rather than a glimpse into the unknown. By the 20th century, Creepshows, travelling ghost shows and theatrical fortune tellers remained popular, and people even had a new kind of entertainment – cinema. But the urge to seek out real-life spooks wouldn't be scuppered.

Right: An issue of *The Graphic* weekly illustrated newspaper, circa 1880, featuring sketches of a Spiritualist séance held in London

Far right: A Ghost Bus comedy-horror sightseeing tour transporting tourists from haunted hotspot to haunted hotspot in Edinburgh


THE GRAPHIC

THE GHOST BUS TOURS
EDINBURGH NECROBUS

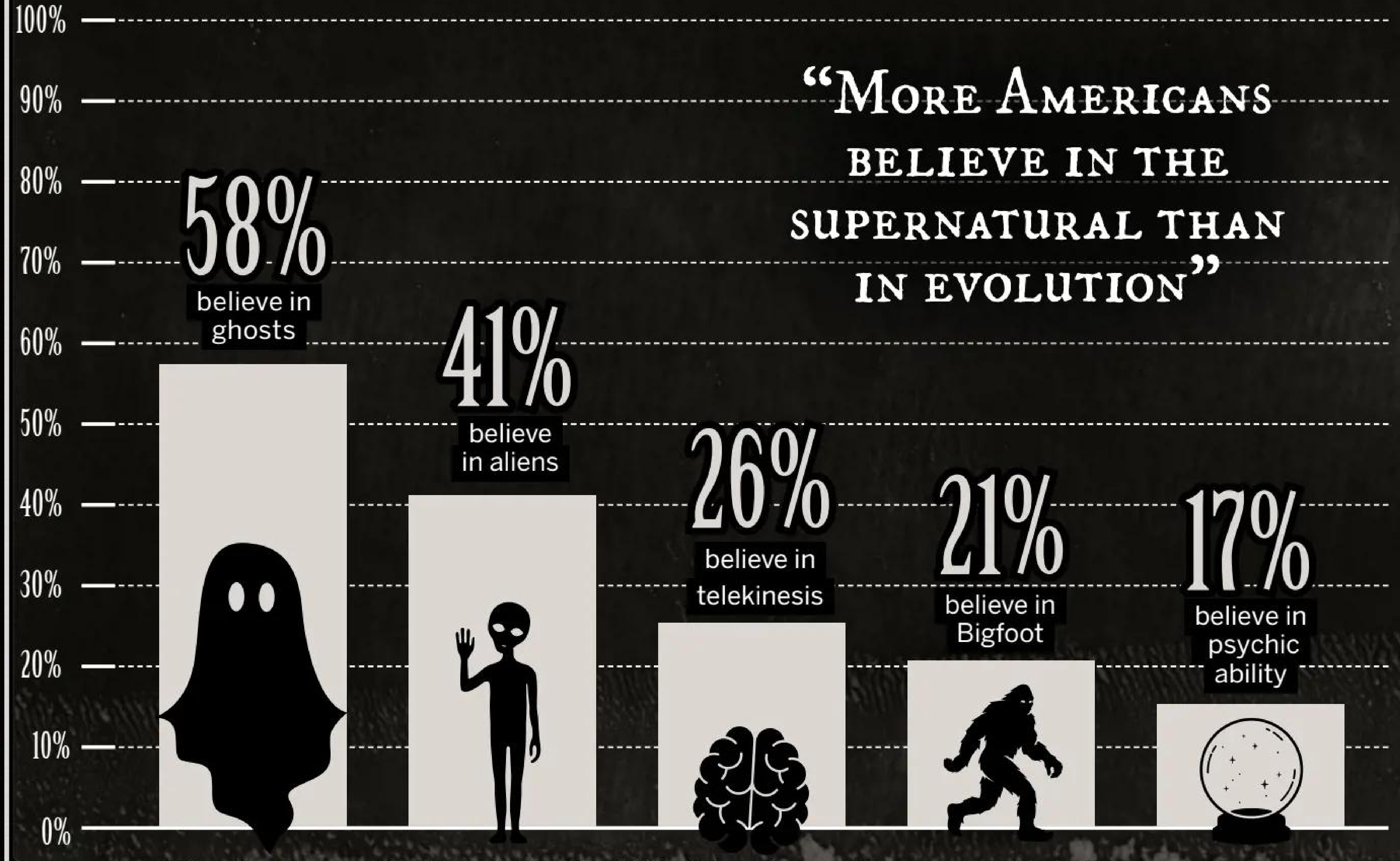
KEEPING HISTORY ALIVE

At the start of the 1900s, tours of historical houses across Europe, such as Hampton Court Palace, would include dark tales and ghostly legends, leading to merchandise, such as postcards featuring images of the property's ghosts, supposedly caught on camera. The spirit photography phenomenon encouraged tourism to spots where spirits had reportedly been snapped. The ghost of Lord Combermere, photographed in 1891 at Combermere Abbey in Cheshire draws interest to this day, and the Brown Lady of Raynham Hall (p51), captured in 1936 and published in *Country Life* magazine, still entices visitors to the stately home. By the 1990s, preservation societies had realised that many old buildings could attract visitors by capitalising on the buildings morbid and haunted history – subsequently funding the restoration and continued conservation of the property. Ohio State Reformatory was cited for demolition until the Mansfield Reformatory Preservation Society purchased the prison for one measly dollar and began running ghost tours and offering ghost hunts and private paranormal investigations on the site. In 1994, Gettysburg began ghost tours specifically to help develop the town as a heritage tourist destination. Today, more and more historic properties are keeping legends alive, chronicling local folklore and educating the public about the paranormal and belief in it, all the while funding the maintenance of these significant sites of historical interest. So whether you believe in the supernatural or not, one thing is for sure – haunted tourism is here to stay, and it's an important aspect of historic preservation.

WE WANT TO BELIEVE

Mid-century anthropologist Anthony Wallace predicted that "belief in supernatural beings and in supernatural forces that affect nature without obeying nature's laws will erode and become only an interesting historical memory." But boy oh boy was he wrong. One study by Chapman University discovered that many Americans still believe in the paranormal, from the most common superstitions, such as haunted houses, to Bigfoot and soothsayers. In fact, more Americans believe in the supernatural than believe in scientific theories such as Darwin's theory of evolution, or that humanity has any impact on climate change. Similar studies have shown that large proportions of people living in other scientifically advanced nations continue to believe in paranormal phenomena, with one UK study revealing a similar pattern of faith – over half of the British public believe in ghosts, and over 30 per cent are convinced aliens have visited.

> "More Americans believe in the supernatural than in evolution"



*The chart represents the beliefs of the 52% of Americans with paranormal beliefs.

SPELLBOUND SCHOLARS

Even the most enlightened minds of the 19th century believed in the supernatural. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a magical secret society that devoted itself to metaphysics and the occult had members such as poet William Butler Yeats and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (who was also a Spiritualist and believer in fairies).

Image source: Getty; Alamy

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Below: In a technological world, 21st century paranormal investigators are turning to increasingly sophisticated methods in their search for proof of ghosts

INVESTIGATING THE PARANORMAL

The paranormal has fascinated people for centuries, from bumps in the night to crackling EVPS. In the technological 21st century, ghost-hunting is more popular than ever

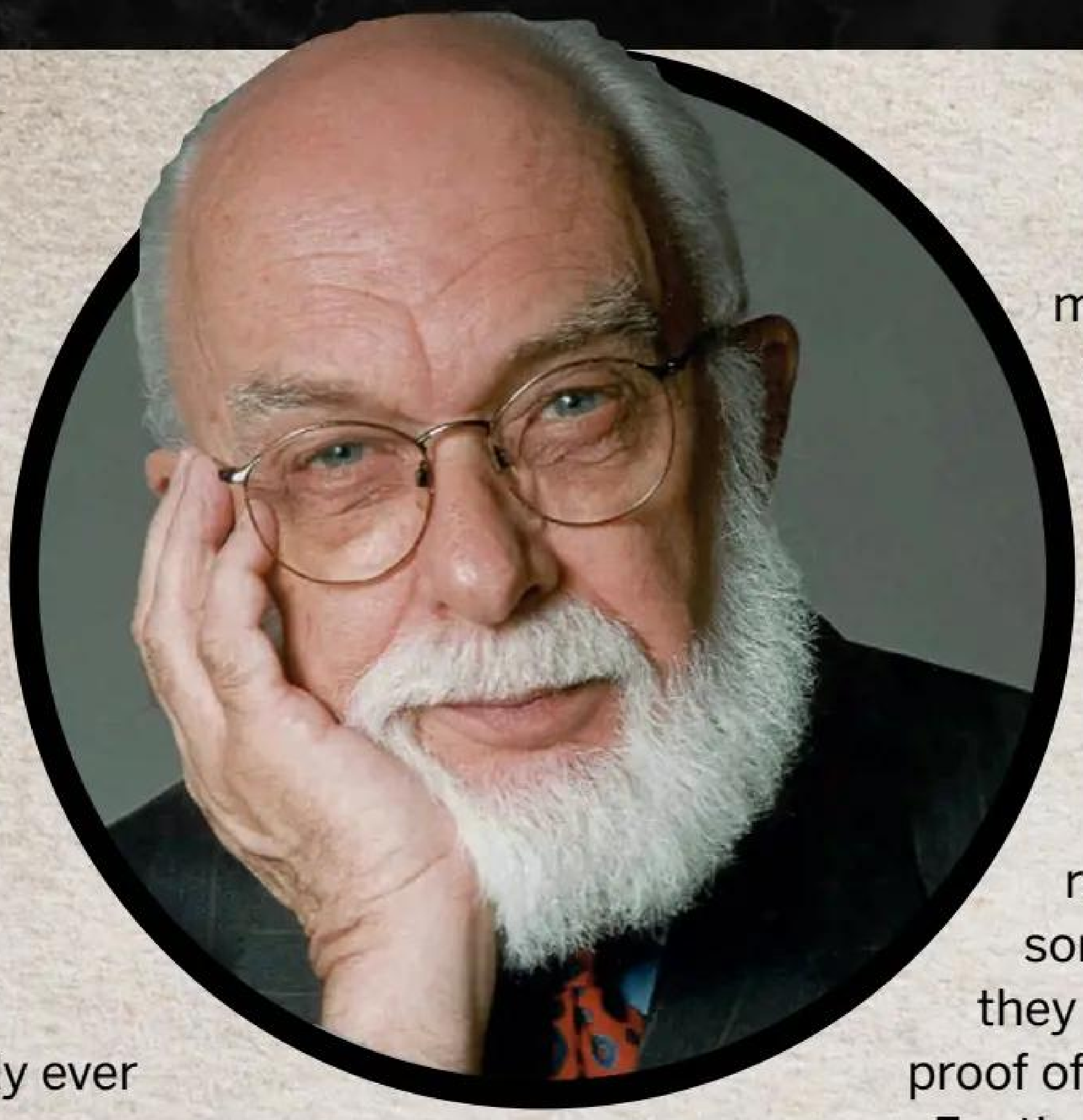
Whether it's paranormal investigators with vans full of expensive technology or old-fashioned ghost-hunters with little more than a torch, the search for ghosts is as popular as it has ever been. It's big business for some, with television and commercial ghost hunts making stars of investigators, whilst for others it's just a bit of fun. In their search for the truth, believers and sceptics alike employ everything from clairvoyance and ouija boards to the latest digital technology, with every discovery analysed to prove whether death is really the end.

Though for most ghost-hunters the supernatural is nothing but a hobby, others have made it their career. When it comes to these professional investigators, Britain's most famous is undoubtedly Harry Price. As a member of the Society for Psychical Research, founder of the rival National Laboratory of Psychical Research and the figurehead of the Ghost Club, Price's paranormal career spanned the first half of the 20th century. His investigations were a far cry from the excitable scenes we see on paranormal TV shows, and though Price believed in the supernatural, he did so with skepticism – whilst exposing fraudulent mediums, fake ectoplasmic photographs, and hoax hauntings.

Price's most famous investigation was undertaken at Essex's notorious Borley Rectory (see page 49), reputed before it was destroyed by fire to be the most haunted place in Britain. Borley was Price's pet project and his books on the subject did much to build the legend that sprang up around the rectory. Though many of his findings were discredited by the Society of Psychical Research and have been further debunked by modern researchers, it made Price himself famous. Whenever there were ghosts to be investigated, Price was on the scene and newspapers were quick to quote his take on supernatural scoops.

In America, meanwhile, husband and wife team Ed and Lorraine Warren were chalking up hit after hit as they pursued not only ghosts, but demons too. Among the 10,000 cases that the Warrens claimed to have examined was the infamous Amityville haunting, which became a Hollywood phenomenon, and the couple even went on the record to claim that a prisoner convicted of manslaughter had been acting under demonic influence when the crime was committed. They didn't secure his freedom, but the case did nothing to harm the Warrens' celebrity. Their names are familiar to a whole new generation thanks to the *Conjuring* film series, in which the Warrens take on everything from the supposedly true story of the Enfield Poltergeist (page 50) to a fictional demon nun. Though the Warrens are both deceased, the films based on their career show no sign of stopping.

Of course, where there are believers, there are sceptics too. One of the most famous and tenacious is undoubtedly James Randi, founder of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, which is devoted to proving that the paranormal is nothing but fiction. From orbs to séances and everything in between, these headline-grabbing sceptics analyse and interrogate paranormal evidence using rigorous scientific methods. For more



Above: James Randi has devoted his life to disproving the paranormal. He even offered a million dollars to anyone who could provide proof

than 50 years Randi offered $1 million to anyone who could demonstrate paranormal phenomena in laboratory conditions. In the half century that the challenge was open, and despite more than a thousand candidates coming forward, nobody ever won the prize.

Paranormal investigations today use modern technology, just as their forebears called on table-tapping to make contact. There are even companies devoted to supplying technological investigation tools including video cameras, digital thermometers to monitor temperature spikes, and the all-important EMF meters. Some investigators claim that spirits cause fluctuations in the electromagnetic field at a haunted location, and they watch the digital meters for anomalies closely. Sceptics and investigators alike admit that fluctuations can be caused by any number of other things including mobile phones and radio signals, but to some ghost-hunters, they provide positive proof of a nearby phantom. For those who'd like to hear voices from the other world, there are a couple of technological options. One is the spirit box, a device that scans through AM and FM frequencies, supposedly allowing the dead to communicate through the static. Of course, radio stations often broadcast spoken word, leaving the voices picked up on spirit boxes open to question.

More words from the other side are sought in Electronic Voice Phenomena, better known as EVPs. These are recordings in which an investigator will ask questions aloud, leaving pauses for a reply. They are then played back and the audio combed for any hidden responses, that may be buried deep in the apparent silence.

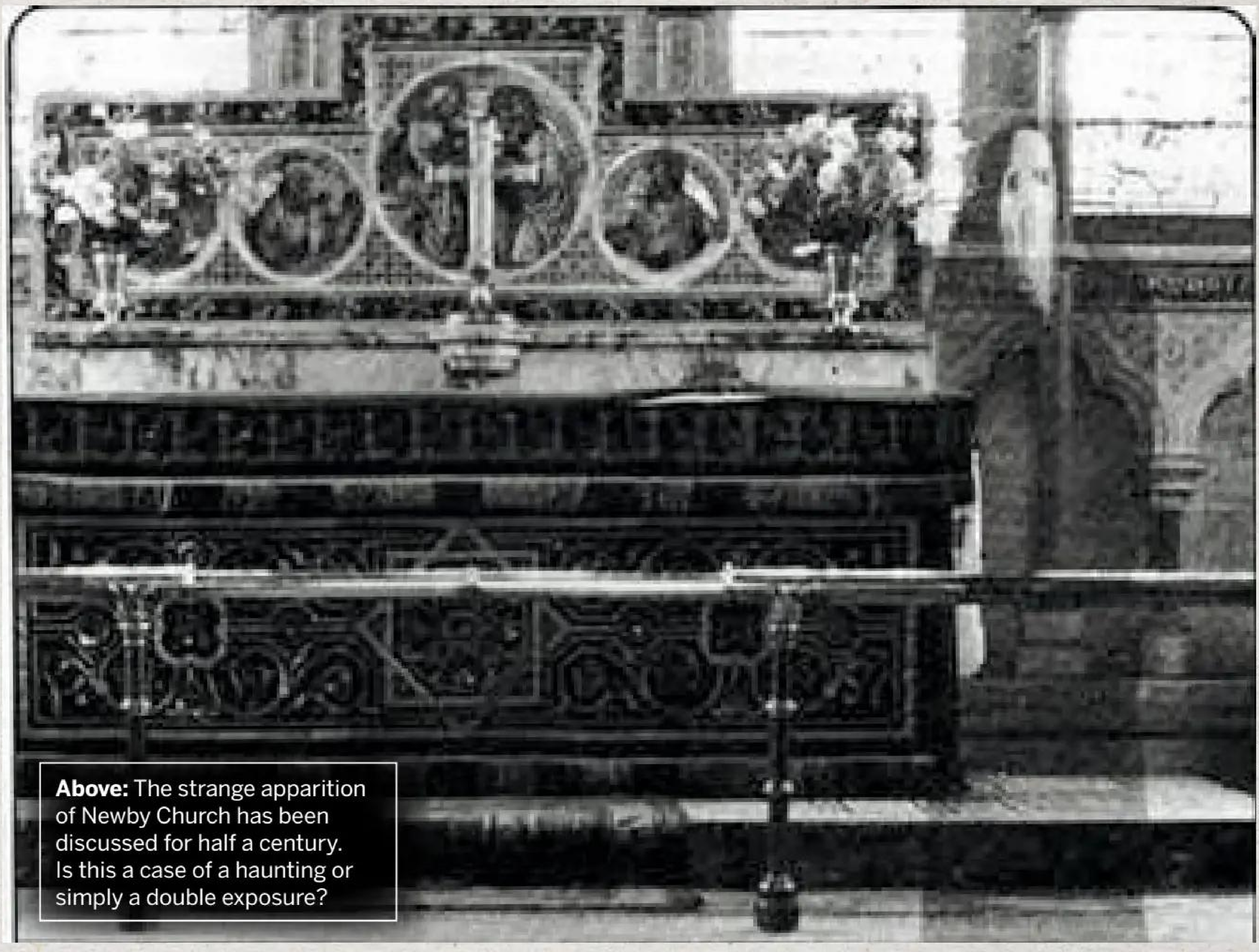
EVPs gained popularity in the 1950s thanks to Friedrich Jürgenson, who claimed to have captured the voices of deceased family members when recording birdsong. In the 1970s Latvian intellectual Konstantin Raudive claimed that his own recordings, many of which sounded like gibberish, were the voices of the dead. He explained away the gibberish by claiming that spirits would change languages in the middle of a sentence or even speak backwards, mispronouncing and garbling words in their efforts to communicate. His critics weren't convinced and questioned why historical figures such as Hitler suddenly spoke Latvian, when they hadn't in life. Raudive answered that spirits were capable of identity theft too, adopting famous names to stand out from the pack.

> Ghost-hunting methods can include recording and playing back sound, replaying CCTV, or investigating electromagnetic oddities

Much of the technological search for ghosts takes place in a world of static, where seemingly random patterns and sounds are analysed in the hope that they hide something valuable, whether that's a cold spot that never warms up, a spike on the EMF meter that appears to move in response to an investigator's requests, or white noise that can be mixed until audible words emerge. Yet technology is prone to failure and manipulation, and humans are given to wish fulfilment, so desperate to obtain proof of the paranormal that they misinterpret inconsequential coincidences. There is also the possibility of dishonesty, and investigators hoping to make their name have been accused of deliberate fakery, particularly when it comes to those featured on paranormal television.

The holy grail for psychic investigators is, of course, a genuine photograph of a phantom. Since William H Mumler created a hoax spirit photo in the 19th century, investigators have striven to capture the real thing. They have succeeded in photographing everything from distorted monks at Newby Church to phantom cemetery mourners, whilst even Google Maps has got in on the act, with users periodically reporting ghostly phenomena in their Street View photographs. Yet even where photographic analysis has failed to prove that the images

Below: Paranormal investigator Harry Price made his name thanks to his work on cases such as Borley Rectory and the strange matter of Gef, the talking mongoose



Above: The strange apparition of Newby Church has been discussed for half a century. Is this a case of a haunting or simply a double exposure?

Image source: Via Wikipedia - Reverend KF Lord

have been manipulated, there's a degree of trust required when considering them as evidence. After all, even if a photographer claims that there was nobody in the frame when the shot was taken, it's not impossible that someone might have wandered unseen into the shot or colluded with the photographer in a deliberate hoax. In recent years the advent of digital photography has seen a rise in pictures of so-called orbs, which are small, floating balls of light visible on camera or film. Investigators believe that these are the first signs of a manifestation, but their critics suggest what they are actually capturing are digital artefacts, specks of dust or insects.

Critics of ghost-hunting are quick to point out that investigators are usually amateurs who have little specialist training or knowledge of how to get the best out of their technology. They also argue that believers are subject to confirmation bias, jumping to the conclusion that any anomaly is a ghost when in fact there can be a host of more earthly reasons to consider first, including radio interference, human intervention or simple reflections. Without controlled scientific conditions, they say, investigations cannot be trusted, even if those conducting them are honest.

When technology fails, investigators turn to tried and tested methods, and chief amongst these is the psychic medium. With no special equipment required, mediums visit a location and attempt to make contact with the spirits who walk there. Organised investigations often involve a medium, whose purpose is to lead communication with the spirits. TV shows such as *Most Haunted* have made such investigations hugely popular, with participants joining investigators and renowned mediums in the hope of seeing proof of the paranormal.

Paranormal investigations and those who conduct them are here to stay. Perhaps one day someone will stumble on irrefutable proof of a ghost and capture it on camera in the scientific conditions that sceptics demand. Perhaps, however, the search for paranormal proof isn't about the conclusion itself, but about the journey believers and sceptics alike take to get there, and the spirited debates that they enjoy on the way.

Image source: Via Wikipedia- Earth100

Left: Whilst some believe that orbs are spirit manifestations, photographic experts suggest that they are far more likely to be reflected moisture, dust or even insects

WATCHING THE PARANORMAL INVESTIGATORS

Why ghost-hunters have us glued to our sofas

Pranormal investigations make for popular, cheap and controversial television. In the UK, *Most Haunted* has run for a whopping 25 seasons, and enjoyed a period of huge popularity. It made a star of its flamboyant resident medium, the late Derek Acorah, who left the show amid allegations of fakery, when he was apparently tricked by production into channelling the spirit of a man who had never actually existed.

In the US, *Ghost Hunters* has criss-crossed the country in search of ghost activity for nearly 250 episodes. It has done much to popularise the use of technology in the search for ghosts and even has its own line of licensed ghost-hunting equipment!

Perhaps the most infamous televised paranormal investigation was *Ghostwatch*. Broadcast on BBC 1 on Halloween in 1992. *Ghostwatch* showcased an investigation in a suburban home. Hosted by Michael Parkinson and featuring well-loved TV presenters, some people believed that what they were watching was a documentary. When presenter Sarah Greene was attacked and viewers were warned that an evil spirit had used the broadcast to enter their homes, the BBC switchboards lit up with terrified callers. The resultant outcry included accusations that the programme had left some viewers hysterical and contributed to at least one suicide. Unsurprisingly, *Ghostwatch* has never been repeated.

Above: The late Derek Acorah achieved notoriety as the resident medium on *Most Haunted*, where he claimed to channel everything from nobility to dead dogs

Images source: Via Wikipedia - Martin J Cooper

A FIELD GUIDE TO SPOOKS

When dipping your toe into the world of investigation, knowing what to look out for can be pretty overwhelming. Luckily, the most important tool of all is your own senses; what can you see, hear, smell? And of course, how does it make you feel? Here's what to look out for…

GHOSTS

Cold spots: Some of the most common sensations are sudden drops in temperature, indicating that a ghostly presence is nearby.

Feelings: Experiencing panic or sudden, extreme tiredness may signal that the spirits are sapping the energy of the living for themselves.

Smells: Foul smells are often reported where there are negative energies, whereas sweet, floral smalls often signal the arrival of a friendly spirit.

Visual indications: Many people report seeing dark shadows moving of their own accord, twinkling lights and 'orbs' Although be wary; if you find orbs in your photographs, they may just be insects, light refractions or dust particles.

CRYPTIDS

Tips: Take care! If you are looking for cryptids, be aware of your environment! If you're outside and looking for evidence, it may be easy to lose your footing and hurt yourself.

Know the local animals so that you can differentiate between potential cryptids and known species, and take a camera and notebook with you to keep track of any findings!

Footprints: Particularly large humanoid prints!

Noises: Listen out for calls, growls, screams or loud taps and booming thuds.

Biological evidence: Check for remnants left behind, such as hair or droppings.

UFOS

Tips: When looking for UFOs be sure to know flight paths and commercial air traffic routes. Knowing what should be in the skies is as important as knowing what shouldn't. Check your local UFO groups for hotspots, and remember to wrap up warm if you're planning on watching the sky at night.

WITCHCRAFT

Tips: Many ancient sites have been used by religions for thousands of years, so while you soak in the atmosphere, remember to be respectful – they may be sacred spaces.

Symbols: Keep an eye out for witch symbols and sigils (often stars, spirals, evil eyes) carved into rock or wood.

Feelings: Many report feelings of dread or just bad vibes when entering cursed or haunted sites. Alternatively, you might feel an ethereal sense of calm at magically-charged sites.

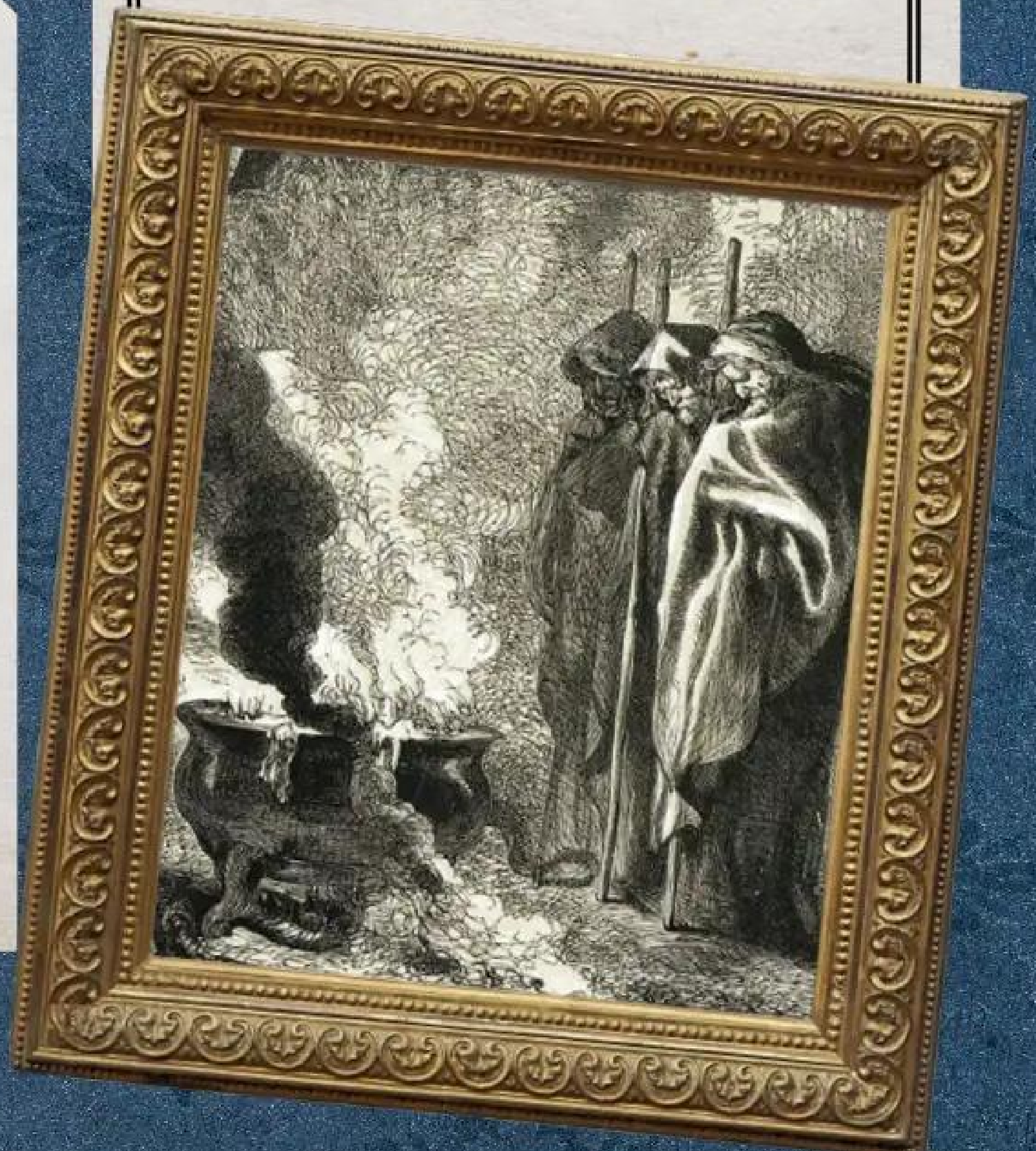


Image source: Getty; Alamy;

PERFORMING A PARANORMAL INVESTIGATION

Investigating the paranormal can be fun and easy, but to enhance the experience, you may want to add a few items into your spooky toolkit

CAMERAS

Be sure to bring a camera or video camera with you on investigations. Not only can you capture snaps of any strange phenomena, but using a video camera means that you can revisit and analyse your investigation and see if you missed any evidence at the time.

DICTAPHONE

A voice recorder is a must for any budding investigator. You can record audio from your experiments and play it back later, or use recorders to communicate with spirits. If you pose a series of questions in a haunted location, you can instantly play back the audio, increase the volume and see if you captured any responses.

EMF METERS

EMF meters are devices that measure the electromagnetic frequency of an item or location. EMF, or K2, meters commonly have a series of coloured bulbs, which light up or sound an alarm when it measures spikes in energy. These can be used to detect the location of spirit energy, or ask ghosts to come closer to the device to signal yes/no answers.

SPIRIT BOXES

A spirit box or a radio hack is a small electronic device that quickly sweeps through radio waves and can be programmed to cycle faster, slower, or backwards. While the audio sounds like white noise, some believe that spirits can use these scrambled frequencies to communicate with the living – try slowing down the sound or shifting the frequencies.

SÉANCES

A séance can be as simple as sitting in a circle, clearing your mind and calling out, asking spirits to communicate. A spirit board, being a flat sheet with the alphabet and simple commands printed on it, can be an integral tool in any experiment. Placing your fingers gently on top of a pointer or glass, ghosts can be asked to move the glass across the board and spell words in response to your questions.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

If you'd like to learn more about the history of the paranormal, get involved with investigations and find out what modern research is being conducted, check out institutions such as The SPR, ASSAP and The Ghost Club.

BRITAIN'S MOST HAUNTED VILLAGE

Pluckley in Kent holds the exciting honour of being Britain's most haunted village, a title that saw it enter the Guinness Book of Records in 1989!

Location: Pluckley, Kent, England

Tips: Pluckley is about an hour from central London by train, perfect for a day trip!

While Pluckley will be familiar to fans of *The Darling Buds of May*, filmed in the village in the 1990s, it has a darker side. The village has 12 to 16 ghosts and has appeared on *Most Haunted* and *Ghost Hunters International*, among others, making it an ideal location for the would-be ghosthunter.

Pluckley dates back to the 11th century and appears in the Domesday Book, although it could be older according to nearby Roman ruins. The village specialised in weaving until the wool trade collapsed. Sadly, the Black Death ravaged Pluckley in the 14th century, making this a site well-versed in death and personal tragedy. The Dering family were lords of the manor between the 15th and early 20th centuries, and they feature in the legends, including our first location!

SCREAMING WOOD

Dering Woods

1 Officially called Dering Wood, many know it by its more terrifying nickname – Screaming Wood. This name comes from the sudden screams that emanate from the depths of the wood. It's especially eerie at dusk, when the trees seem to close in making it hard to find your way.

ST NICHOLAS'S CHURCH

The Street

2 This quaint English church is home to the White Lady and the Red Lady. According to legend, the White Lady haunts the church, having been buried wearing a white dress inside seven coffins and an oak casket. People hear knocking from the family vault beneath the floor in the Dering Chapel, while dancing lights appear in the window.

Some say the White Lady also appeared in the library at the Dering family manor, although the building burned down in 1952. During one such sighting, a terrified man from the US Embassy, who was staying at the manor, shot the White Lady when he saw her ghost on Christmas Eve!

The Red Lady, thought by some to be the ghost of Lady Dering, prowls the churchyard, searching for her stillborn baby's grave with a small white dog by her side.

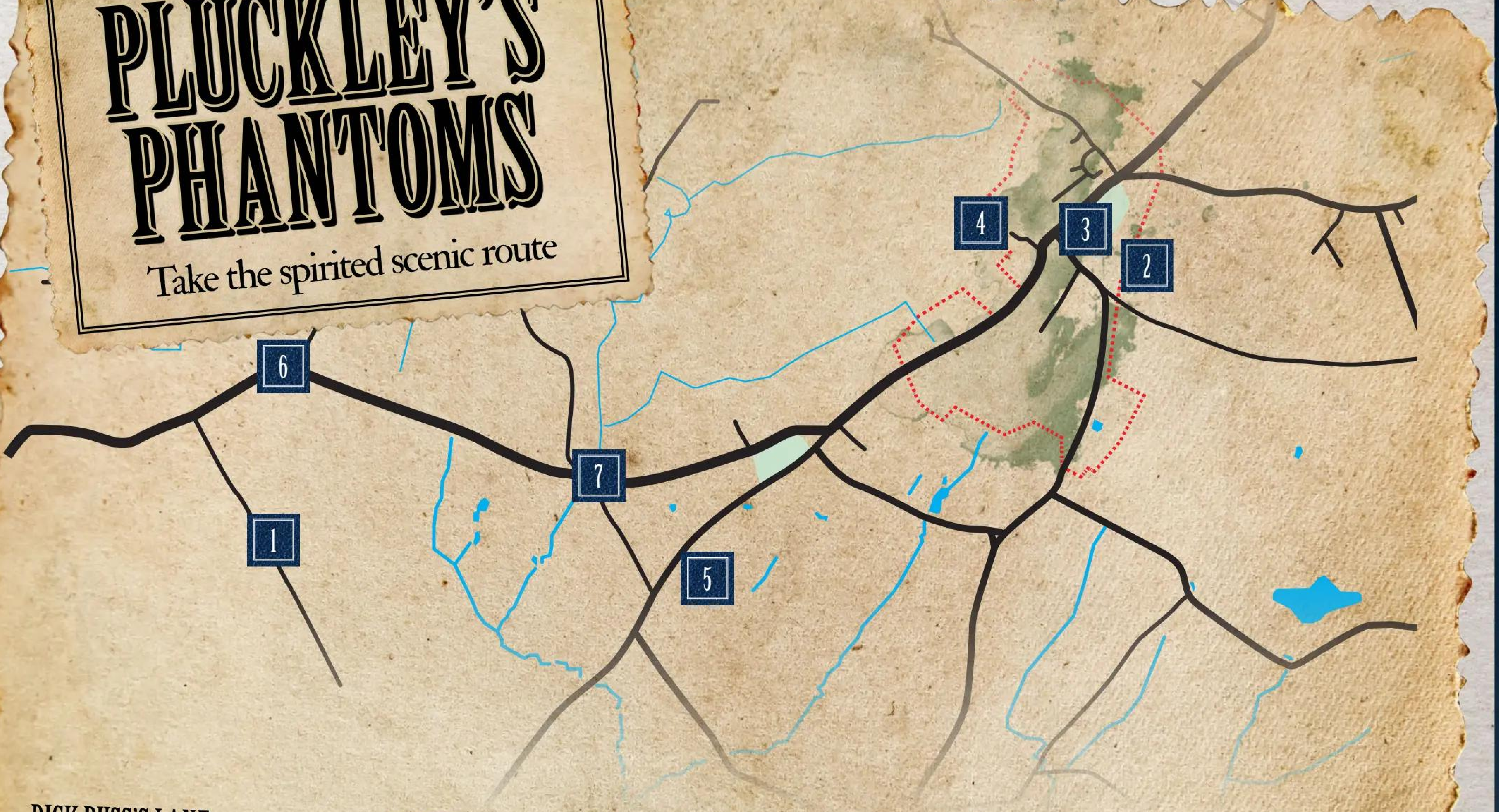
THE BLACK HORSE INN

The Street

3 No haunted village would be complete without a haunted pub, and the 300-year-old Black Horse Inn fits the bill. Customers have seen glasses move on their own, while cutlery is sometimes neatly rearranged near a dresser. Dogs bark at empty spots in the main room and refuse to enter an upstairs room.

PLUCKLEY'S PHANTOMS

Take the spirited scenic route



DICK BUSS'S LANE

Just off Smarden Road

4 A teacher hung himself from a tree here in the 1920s, and it's debated whether schoolchildren or Dick Buss, the local miller, found him. People say they still see his phantom swinging from the branch where he died, usually on a full moon. His shadowy form is said to appear before a thunderstorm.

MALTMAN'S HILL

Smarden Road

5 This street is one of several locations where locals have seen or heard a phantom coach rattling through the village. One witness saw the coach roll by with brightly lit windows and a horse in the harness. In 1997, a driver heard hooves on cobbles but saw no coach – a common feature of the encounters.

FRIGHT CORNER

Smarden Bell Road/Greenhill Lane

6 Fright Corner is the fantastic name of the crossroads near Screaming Wood. A shadowy figure stalks the area, and locals believe he's an 18th-century highwayman killed by the lawmen of the village; a spectral fight sometimes played out for witnesses. Some people have even seen him pinned to a tree stump by a sword!

PINNOCK BRIDGE

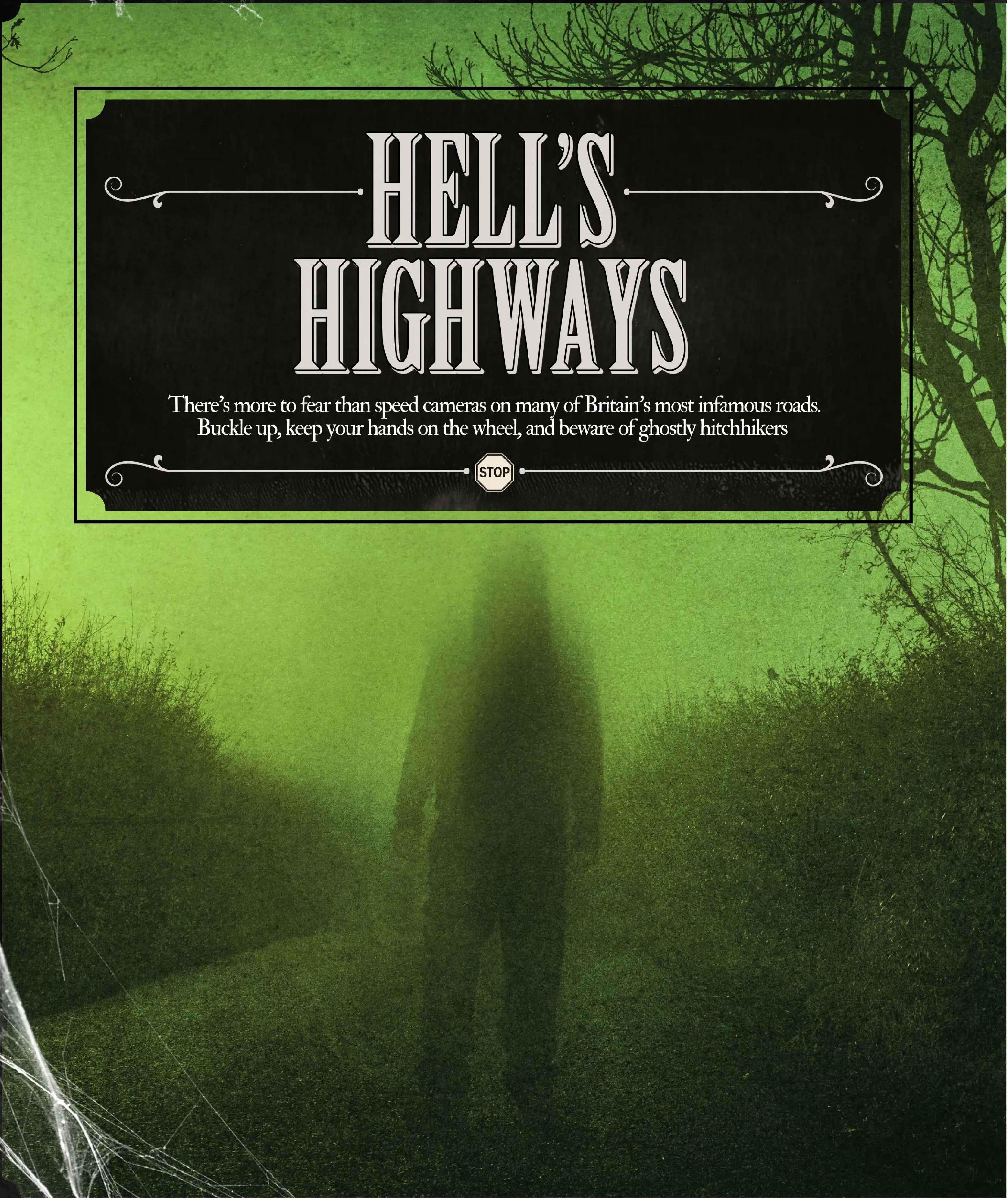
Smarden Bell Road

7 The ghost of an old woman haunts this area although, nowadays, she's seen as a pink light hovering above the ground. According to legend, a watercress seller lived in the area and accidentally dropped her pipe onto the woman's clothes one night as she slept. They found her charred remains the next day.

Images: © Getty; Alamy

HELL'S HIGHWAYS

There's more to fear than speed cameras on many of Britain's most infamous roads. Buckle up, keep your hands on the wheel, and beware of ghostly hitchhikers



THE ROMAN HIGHWAY

Location: M6, Rugby/Carlisle, England

While many of the UK's roads are plagued by spectres, the M6 is a veritable fast lane for the country's undead. An enduring vision across various stretches of the long road has been that of Roman soldiers, sometimes seen marching across the hard shoulder, and other times seen from the knees-up, marching through the road as though they were wading through water. The M6's most famous spirit is arguably a beautiful young hitchhiker, who is believed to be the spirit of a would-be-bride who was killed in a car accident on the eve of her wedding in 1962. She is said to haunt the road, constantly searching for a ride. Scarier still, the ghosts of old lorries have been seen driving in the wrong direction, suddenly disappearing before impact.

ENGLAND'S HIGHWAY TO HELL A666

(M 60)
Manchester
Blackburn
A 673 (A 666)
Bury (A 58)
Horwich
A 673
Town centre
(North)
B 6205

Location: A666, Egerton/Darwen, Manchester, England

Known as 'The Devil's Highway', Bolton road on the A666 has been plagued by sudden and inexplicable fog and a host of strange happenings. Infamous for a spate of bad accidents in the 1990s, many believe the trauma of those collisions has remained part of the road itself. Strange shadows have been reported in the woodland flanking the motorway, appearing as figures that dart in and out of tree cover, while a female phantom hitchhiker remains an enduring presence, flagging down cars before vanishing. A lumbering figure in white has also been sighted as recently as 2015, with a driver claiming to have caught the interaction on dashcam. Other spectres have included monks and a faceless hunched figure.

PARANORMAL PLAYTIME

Location: A616 Stocksbridge Bypass, Nottinghamshire/West Yorkshire, UK

While many roads claim to be the UK's most haunted, the Stocksbridge bypass puts forward a convincing claim. The amount of spectres on its tarmac is terrifying, many of which were reported long before the road had been laid. The ghosts of several children wearing old-fashion clothes have been seen by a nearby pylon, both before and after the road's construction. Overheard singing or sometimes playing, the children are believed to be restless spirits. Monks have also been seen, silently watching motorists. Scariest of all, this stretch of road is a real killer, with incredibly high rates of fatalities.

A MINING DISASTER

Location: Platt Lane, Westhoughton, Manchester, England

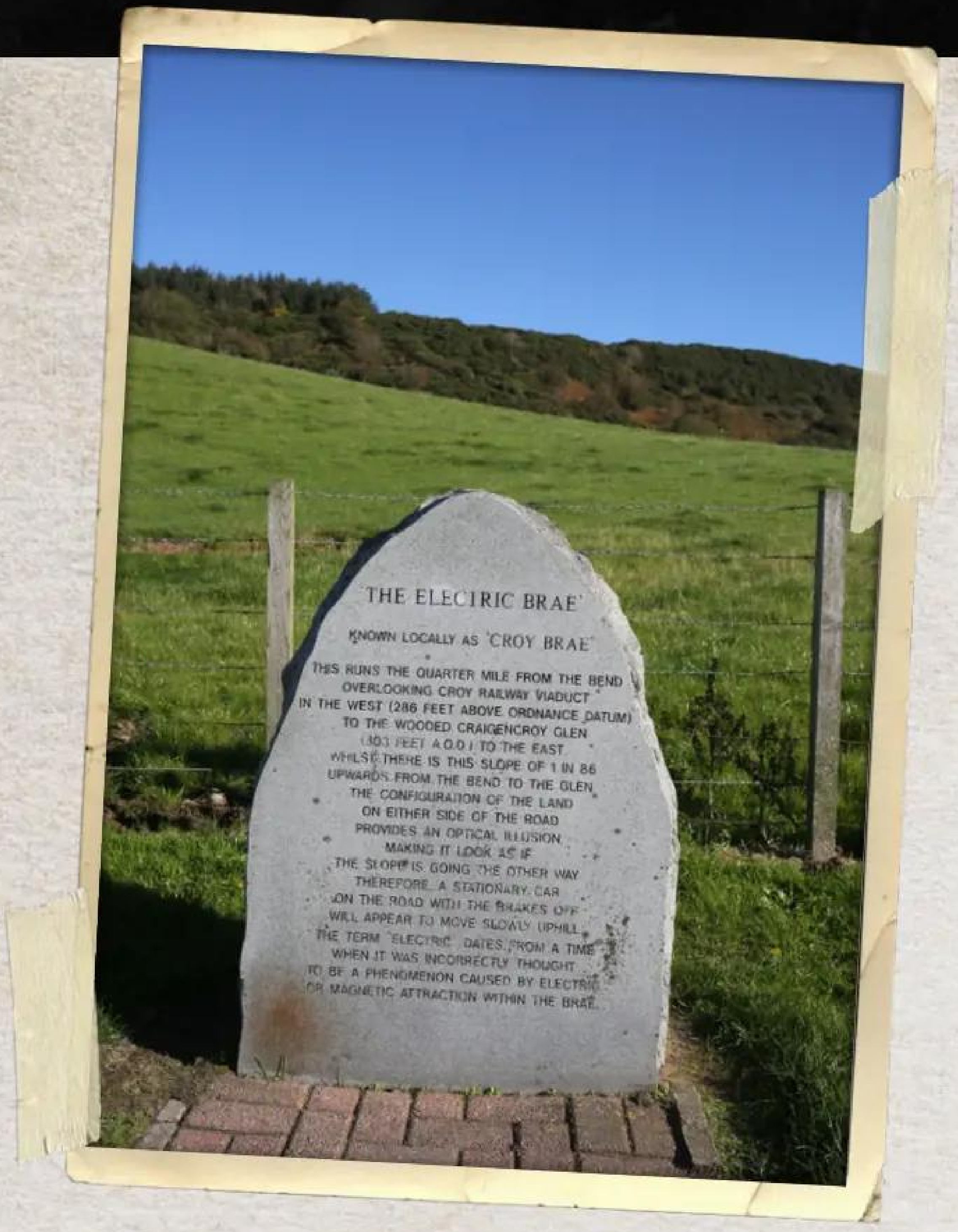
Close to Pretoria Pit, Platt Lane oversaw a truly terrible mining disaster. On 21 December 1910, an early morning gas explosion resulted in the deaths of 344 men and boys in one of the worst mining disasters in British history. Sightings of ghostly miners are still being reported across the area, either silently watching or making their way to work.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

THE GHOST ROAD

Location: A75 Kinmount Straight, Gretna/Stranraer, Scotland

Known quite simply as 'The Ghost Road', the Kinmount Straight is a magnet for supernatural beings. Not just a hotbed for ghosts, a variety of cryptids and strange beasts have also been sighted at the roadside. In 1962, two men reported a 30-minute barrage of terrifying experiences. Derek and Norman Ferguson recounted how their vehicle was besieged by supernatural forces, beginning with a strange spectral hen flying towards their windscreen, before disappearing. This was followed by a stream of spectres and ghostly animals, including an old woman with outstretched arms, a screaming man and a menagerie of animals. After stopping, the vehicle was wracked by violent rocking, before a ghostly van appeared and disappeared, ending the terror.


THE ELECTRIC BRAE
KNOWN LOCALLY AS 'CROY BRAE'
THIS RUNS THE QUARTER MILE FROM THE BEND
OVERLOOKING CROY RAILWAY VIADUCT
IN THE WEST (286 FEET ABOVE ORDNANCE DATUM)
TO THE WOODED CRAIGENCROY GLEN
(303 FEET A.O.D.) TO THE EAST
WHILST THERE IS THIS SLOPE OF 1 IN 86
UPWARDS FROM THE BEND TO THE GLEN
THE CONFIGURATION OF THE LAND
ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ROAD
PROVIDES AN OPTICAL ILLUSION
MAKING IT LOOK AS IF
THE SLOPE IS GOING THE OTHER WAY
THEREFORE A STATIONARY CAR
ON THE ROAD WITH THE BRAKES OFF
WILL APPEAR TO MOVE SLOWLY UPHILL
THE TERM 'ELECTRIC' DATES FROM A TIME
WHEN IT WAS INCORRECTLY THOUGHT
TO BE A PHENOMENON CAUSED BY ELECTRIC
OR MAGNETIC ATTRACTION WITHIN THE BRAE

ELECTRIC BRAE

Location: Croy Brae, Ayrshire, Scotland

Nicknamed 'Electric Brae' by the Victorians, this narrow clifftop road gives drivers the sensation of travelling uphill, when they're really going downhill, and vice versa. Now regarded as just being an optical illusion, Victorians believed that the power of the road itself was pulling and pushing drivers, using its own in-built electrical, supernatural, powers.

THE HAIRY HANDS

Location: B3212, Exeter/Dunsford, Devon, England

Near to Postbridge, on a remote part of Dartmoor, a stretch of the B3212 is haunted by a pair of infamous, terrifying 'Hairy Hands'. A pair of gnarled hands are said to suddenly appear on a motorist's wheel, or cyclist's handlebars, before violently forcing them off the road.

A FORBIDDEN LOVE

Location: A541, Flintshire, Wales

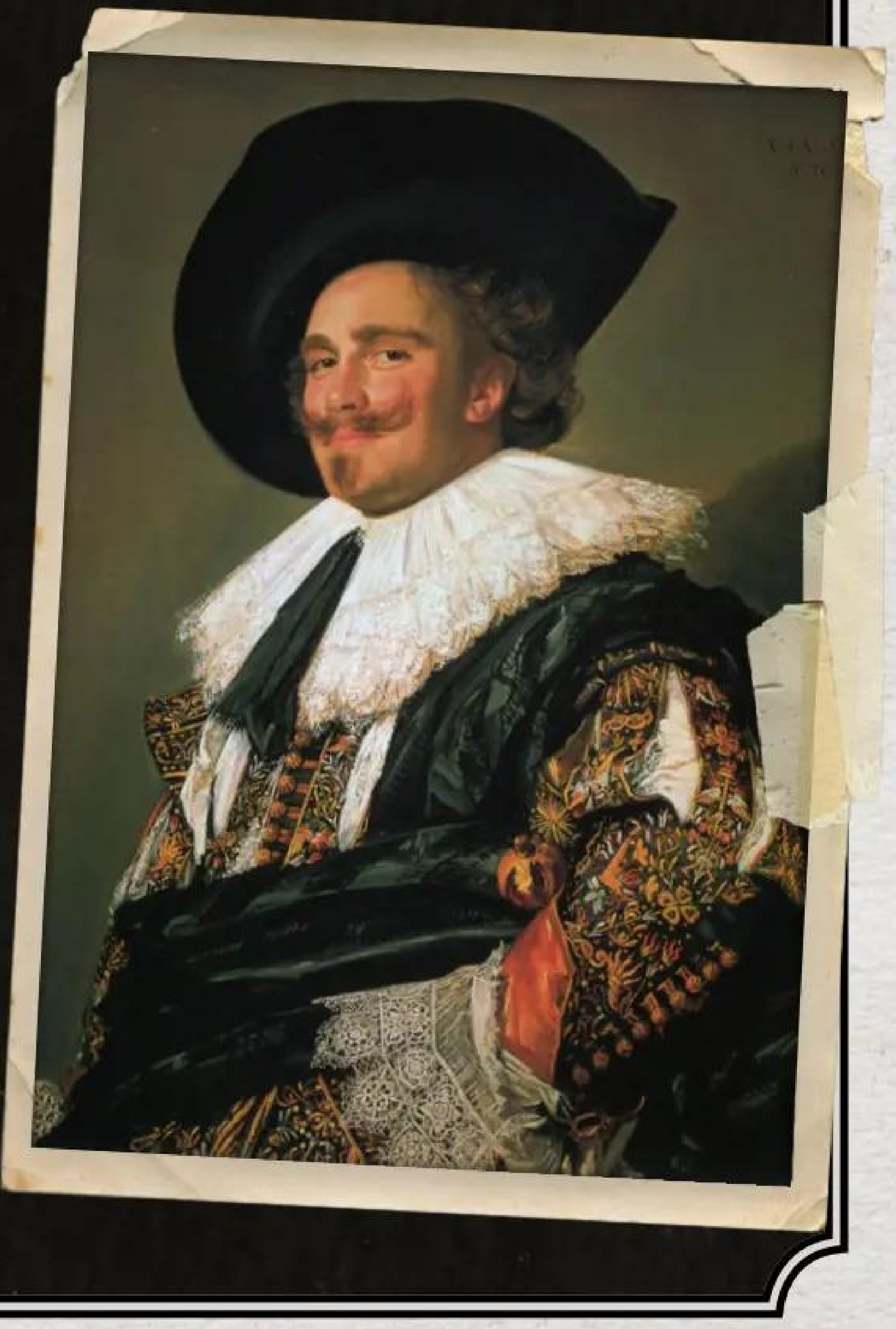
Running close to Plas Teg, one of the most haunted houses in Wales, the A541 has seen its share of the mansion's ghosts. Of the house's spectres, one is eternally linked with the motorway nearby; that of young Dorothy, the daughter of Sir John Trevor I. Dorothy had fallen in love with a local farmer's son, much to her father's disapproval, and the pair were forced to elope. Dorothy stashed her valuables near a well and, while attempting to retrieve them at night, she lost her footing and fell. Dorothy's restless spirit has been seen by the A541 for centuries.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

THE CADAVEROUS CAVALIER

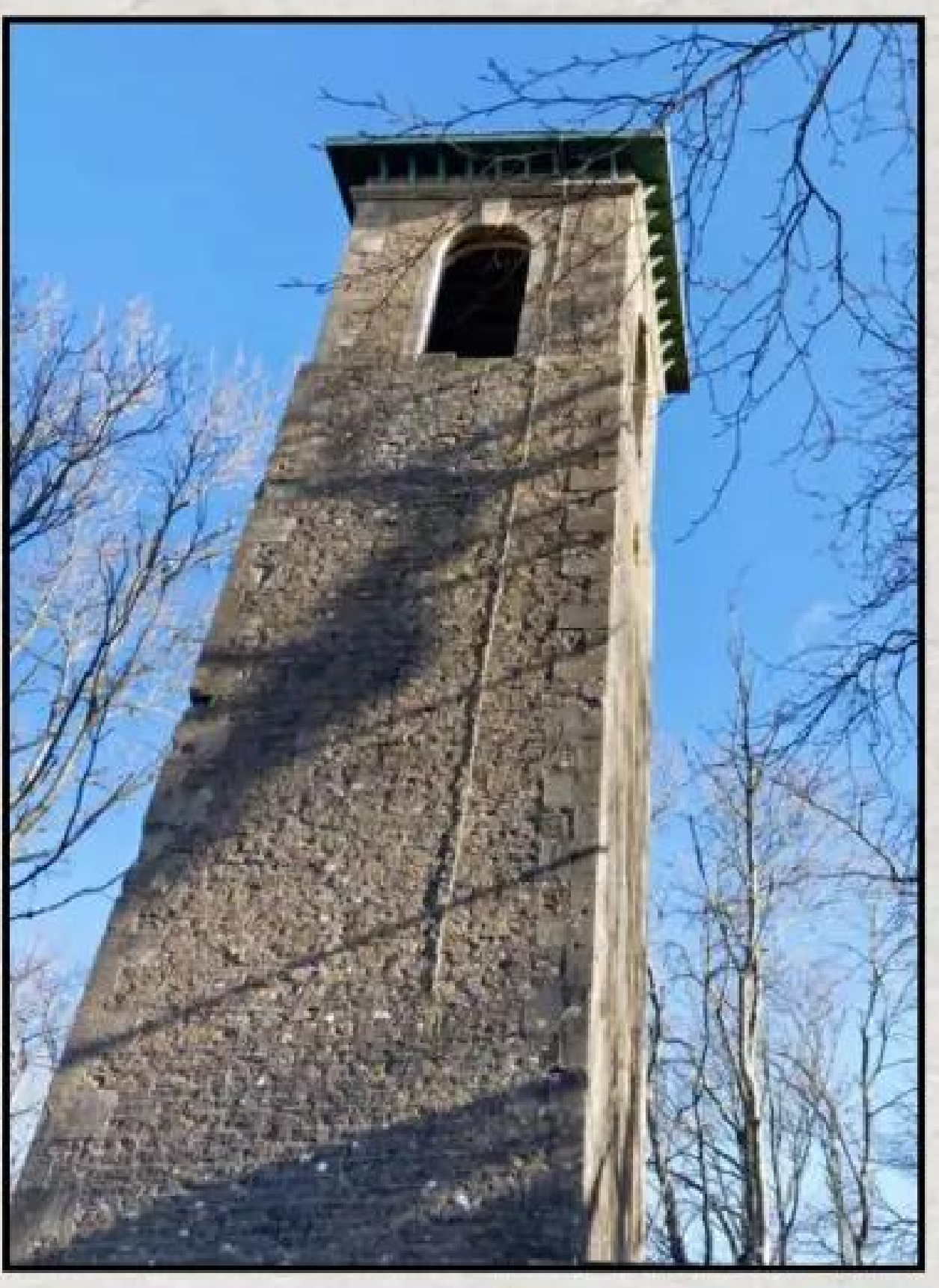
Location: A456, Hagley Road, Birmingham/Central Woofferton, England

The Black Country has its fair share of Cavalier ghosts, with many spotted by major roads. The most famous Cavalier sighting was by a police officer, who saw a figure running across the motorway, who he believed to be in fancy dress. Terrified he hit the man, he exited his car and found absolutely nothing.



SALLY IN THE WOOD

Location: Browne's Folly, A363, Bathford/Bradford-on-Avon, Somerset, England



This rural stretch of road runs through a patch of woodland that is reportedly haunted by the phantom of a murdered girl. According to legend, the birds don't sing in the trees of Sally in the Wood and there have allegedly been eight fatal crashes on this eerie thoroughfare. Some say she leaps out of the woods in a white dress and into the road, running in the way of cars, causing them to appear to knock her down or swerve off the road to avoid her. There are numerous theories as to who the murdered girl, 'Sally', was – a local witch, a victim of a crash herself? Or perhaps there is no girl at all, and the area is just cursed (Sally may not be a name – the word has negative connotations and can be used to mean a sudden violent excursion, dating back to the English Civil War). Whatever the real story, Sally in the Wood has a reputation for being one of Britain's most haunted spots.

THE BRIDE OF BLUE BELL HILL

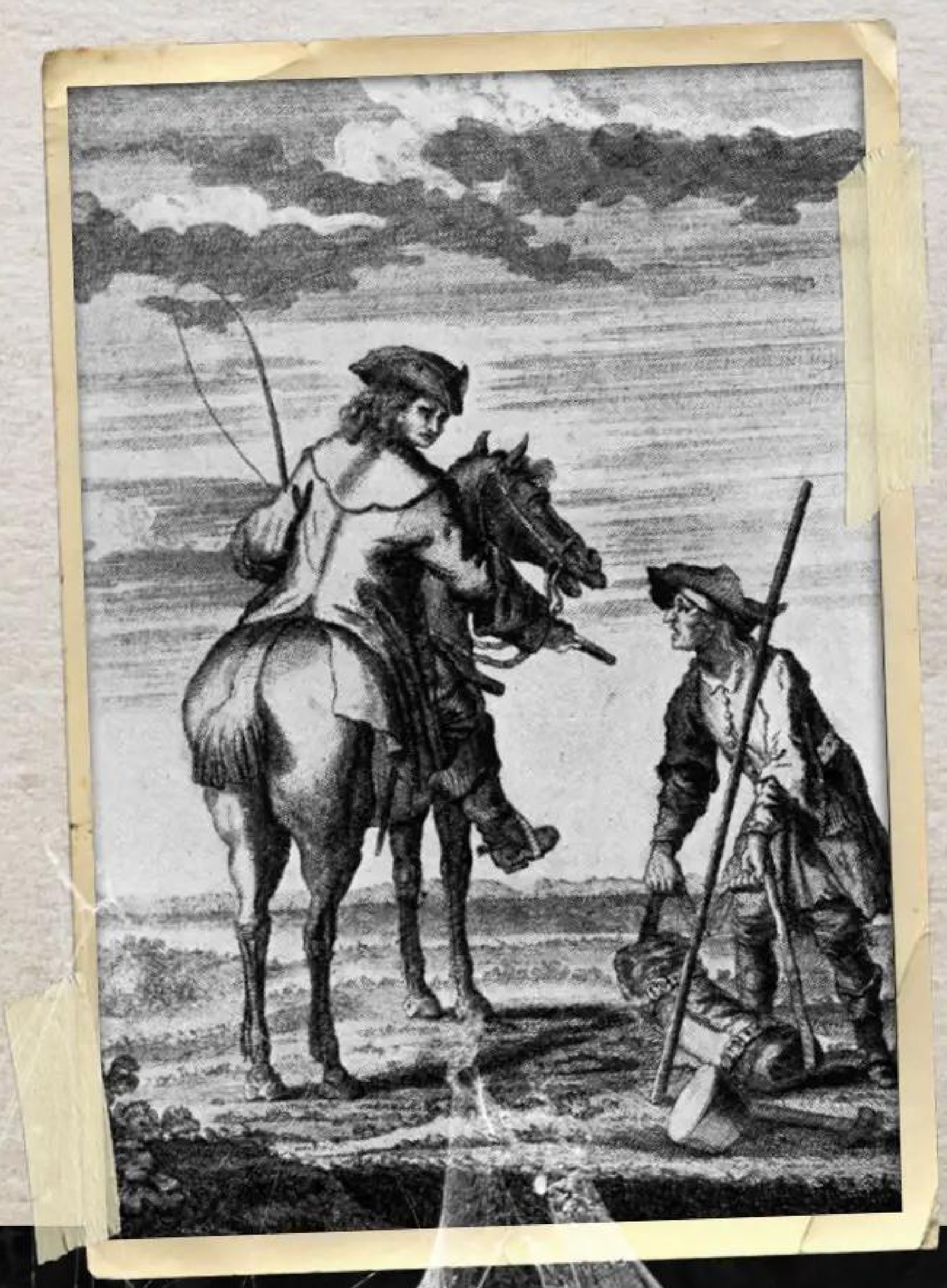
Location: A229, Kent, England

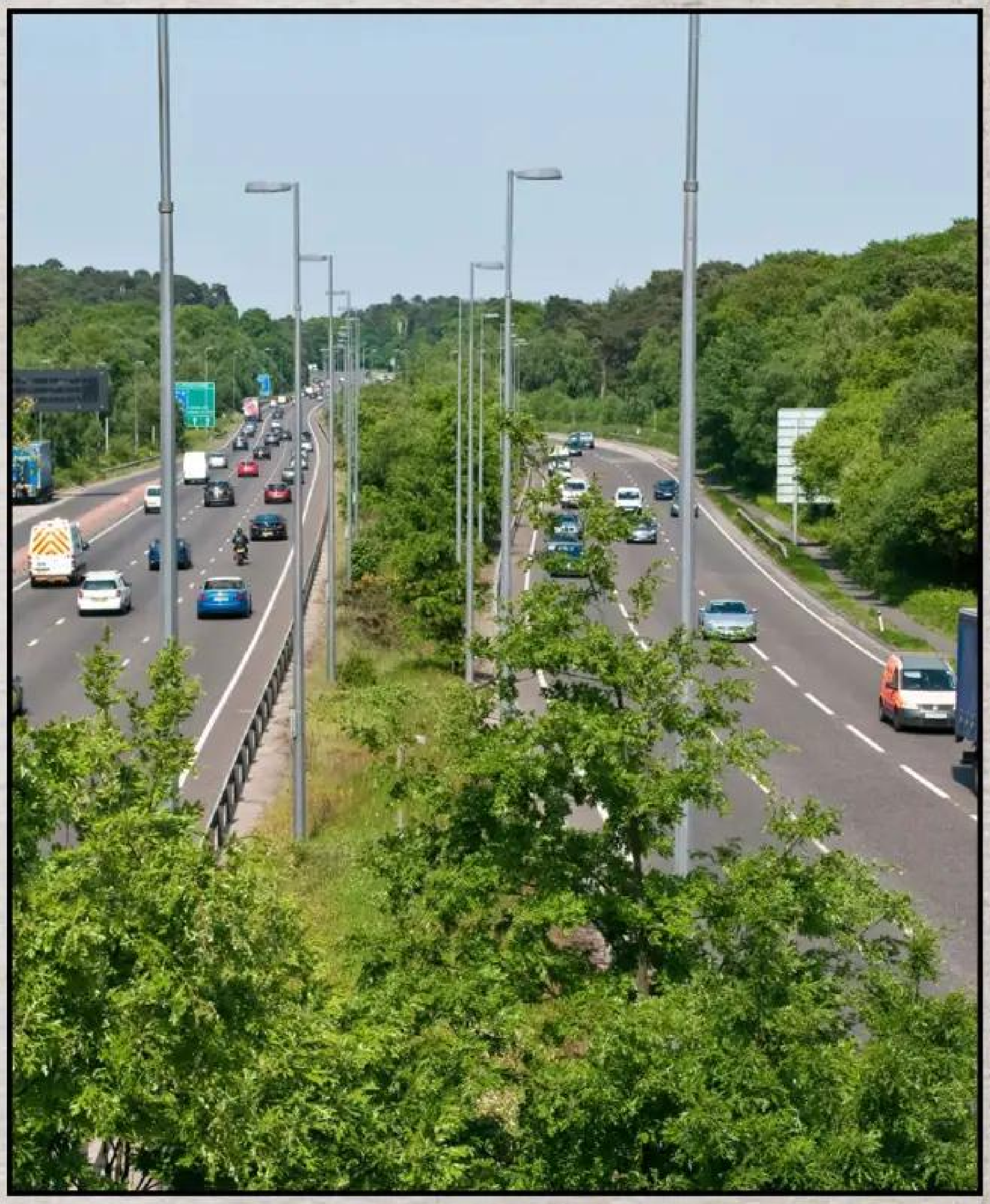
A beautiful woman with striking eyes and dressed all in white has been thought to haunt Blue Bell Hill since 1965. Spotted by multiple motorists in the intervening years, the figure of the 'white lady' is believed to be the lingering spirit of Judith Langham, a young woman who was tragically killed in a road accident while en route to her wedding. Several drivers have reported seeing the figure suddenly appear in front of their vehicle, while one man claimed to have hit the bride and wrapped her in a blanket while he called for help. However, upon his return, the woman had disappeared.

THE HIGHWAY-MAN'S HAUNT

Location: B519, Hampstead, London, England

Close to the Spaniards Inn in Hampstead, the undead son of a former landlord is said to haunt the environs, attempting to commit crimes from beyond the grave. A vicious 18th-century highwayman when he was alive, the ruthless man is thought to still linger by the road, still hoping to rob passing motorists of their loot.





THE GHOST CRASH

Location: A3, Near Guildford, Surrey, England

In December 2002, police received countless calls from motorists who reported a crash by a slip road of the A3. Arriving on scene, there was nothing to see, yet not far away, completely hidden by trees, was a five-month old crash site, including the remains of a wanted man.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

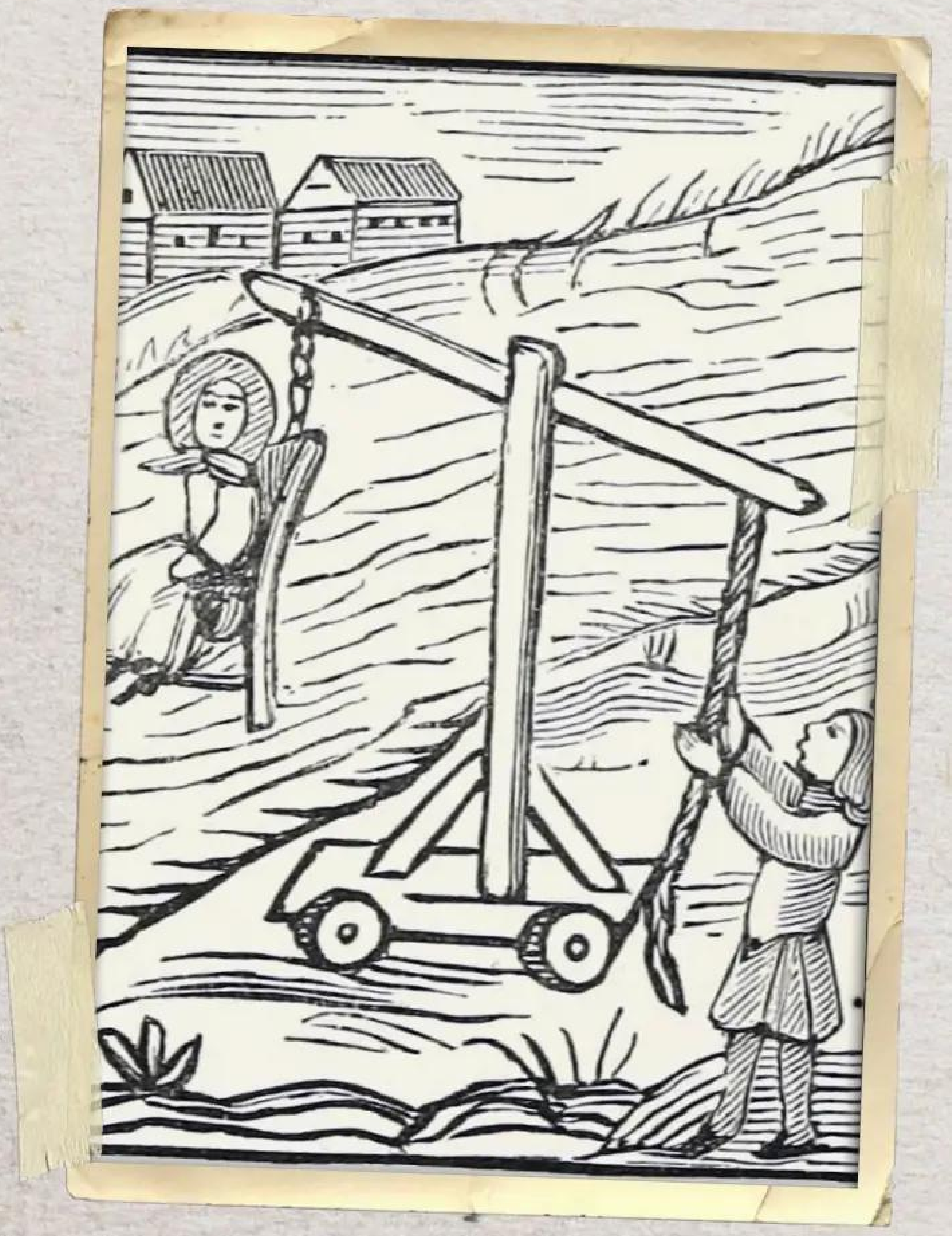
BRIDGES OVER TROUBLED WATER

While bridges are often associated with trolls and mythical creatures, paranormal associations with the structures are stronger than ever

COLTISHALL BRIDGE

Location: The River Bure/B1150, Coltishall, Norfolk, England

The idyllic village of Coltishall on the Norfolk Broads is said to be patrolled by one of the county's most infamous mythical beasts. Black Shuck – an enormous demon dog with glowing red eyes – has long been associated with Coltishall Bridge, where he is said to prowl, waiting for an unfortunate victim. The spirit of Tudor Queen Anne Boleyn's father, Sir Thomas Boleyn, is also said to journey across the bridge in a carriage that is pulled by headless horses. He is also thought to appear across several Norfolk bridges on the anniversary of his daughter's execution, travelling all the way from Blickling Hall to Wroxham.



FYE BRIDGE

Location: Norwich, Norfolk, England

Used in Norfolk's 17th-century witch trials, Fye Bridge is haunted by the ghost of an accused witch. During the trials, individuals were tied to a 'ducking stool' before being plunged into the river; if they died, they were innocent, and if they lived, they were a witch. The Fye Bridge is haunted by a woman who survived the ducking, but was burned for witchcraft. She is seen picking up a bundle of sticks to help build her pyre, asking passers-by for help. But beware, those who assist her are said to die in a fire within a year.

DEVIL'S BRIDGE ON SPOOKY LANE

Location: Nettleden Farm, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, England

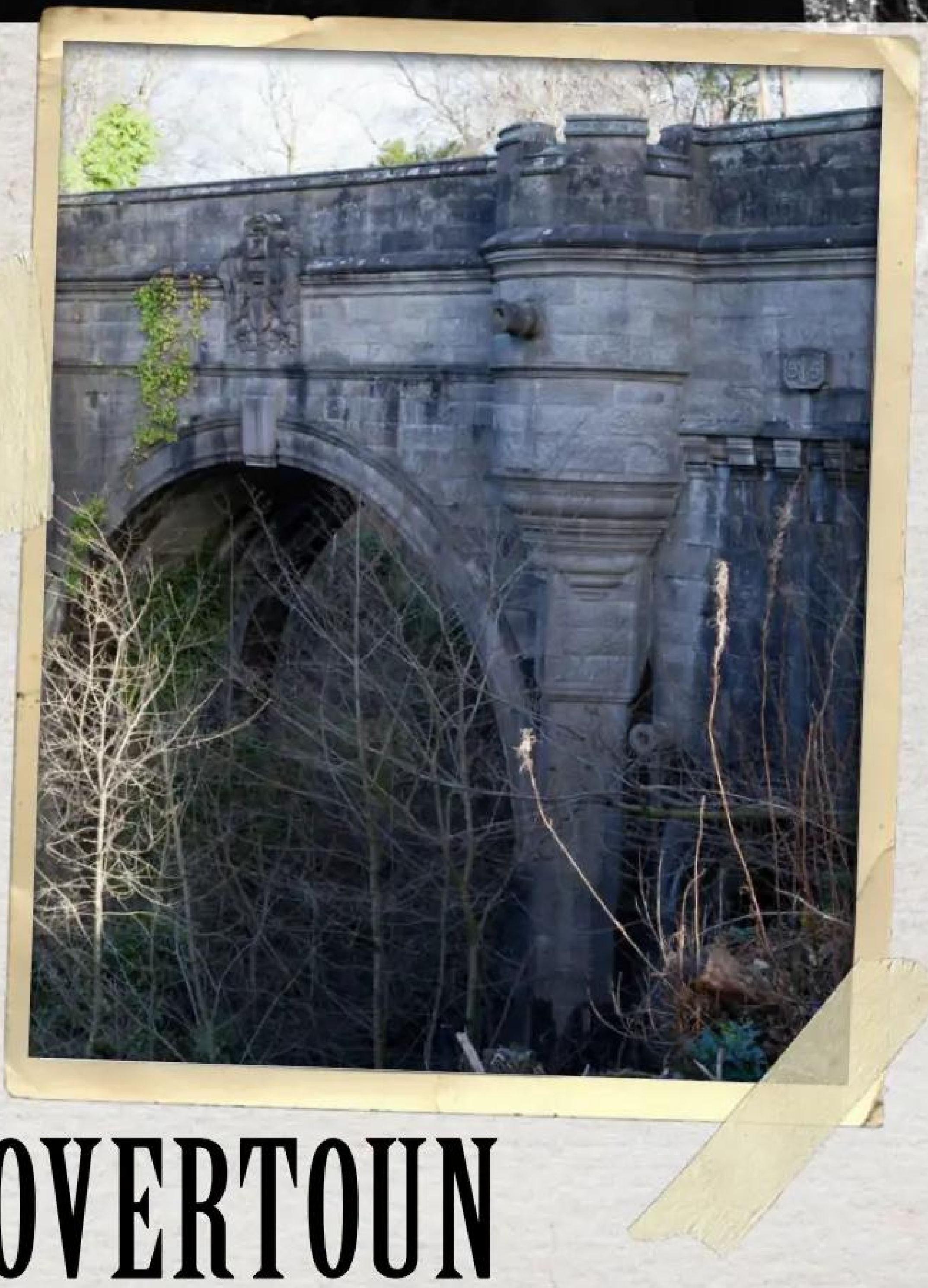
The so-called 'Devil's Bridge on 'Spooky Lane' was never going to be free from paranormal attachments, and this Hertfordshire bridge surpasses all expectations. Stretching over an overgrown, sunken Roman road, a host of ghosts have been spotted beneath Devil's Bridge, including a Roman soldier, a silent monk and mysterious red 'corpse lights' with evil intent. The area is said to have a strange effect on cars and wildlife, with animals acting spooked and cars breaking down with no cause. Rumours of witchcraft and devil worship also linger by the bridge, leaving many locals fearful to walk past.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

DEVIL'S BRIDGE, CUMBRIA

Location: The River Lune, Kirkby Lonsdale, Cumbria

Cumbria's Devil's Bridge is a huge, three-arched ancient monument, beloved as a local beauty spot and gathering space for bikers. An enduring legend tells of a lady's cow that crossed the river and refused to move. After fruitless attempt to move it, the Devil made an appearance and promised the woman to make her a bridge in exchange for the first soul that crossed it. The next day, the Devil and the woman met by the bridge to fulfil the contract. Instead of her own soul, she tempted her dog across with a bun, thus thwarting the horned beast, who disappeared in a rage.



OVERTOUN BRIDGE

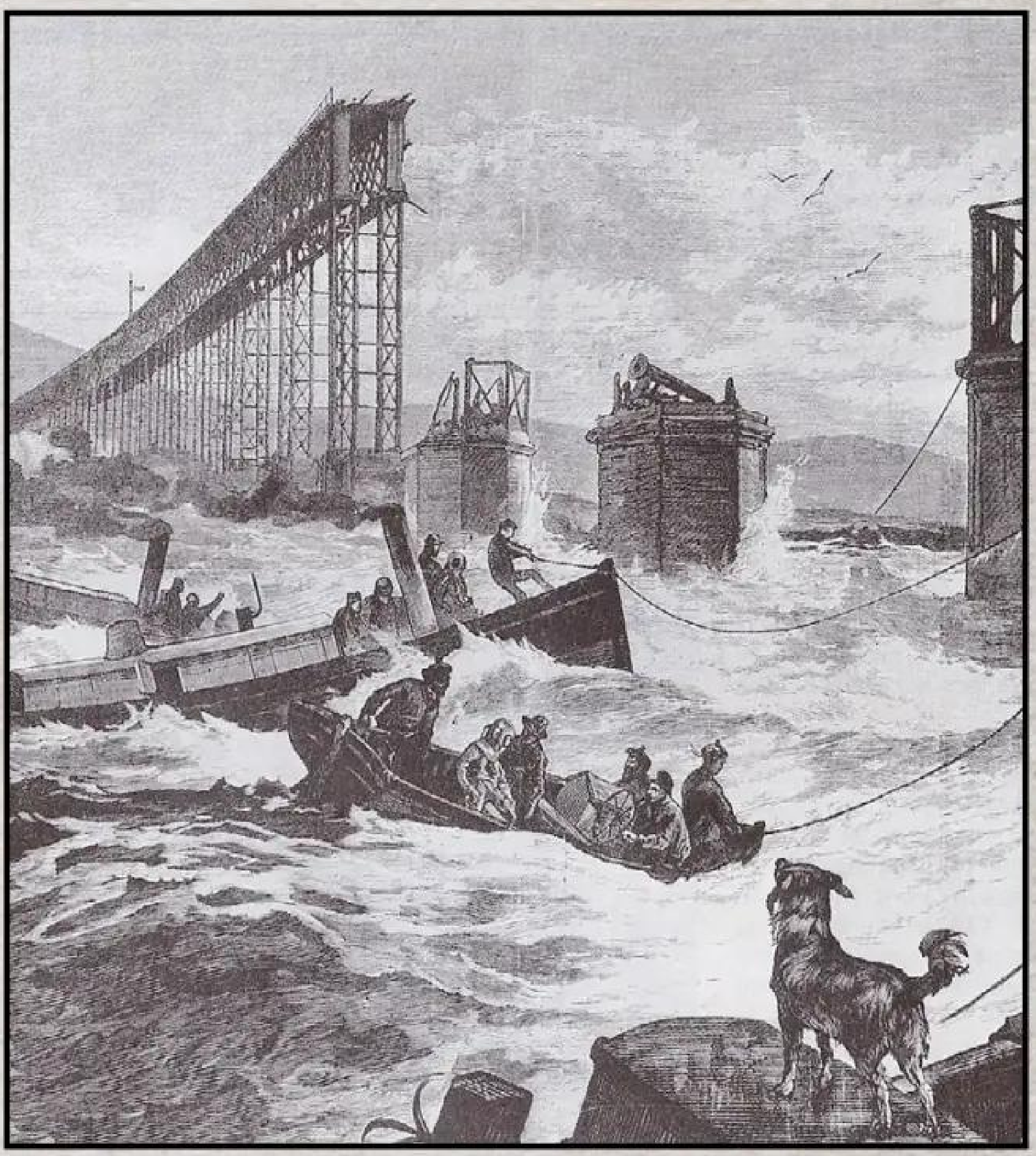
Location: Milton, West Dunbartonshire, Scotland

Originally built as a functional bridge for transporting building materials to Overtoun House, the structure is now regarded as a suicide hotspot, following a murder-suicide attempt in the 1990s and the mysterious deaths of several dogs. Infamously, a large number of dogs are reported to have suddenly leapt to their deaths from the bridge, implored by some evil paranormal force. Stranger still, each of the dogs jumped from exactly the same place on the bridge; whether urged by scent, vibration or spirit, no-one has been able to explain the phenomena.

THE OLD TAY BRIDGE

Location: Dundee/Fife, Scotland

On 28 December 1879, a violent storm caused the destruction of the Tay Bridge, whereupon a passenger train to Edinburgh crashed into the river, killing all 75 passengers and crew on board. Only 46 bodies were recovered, with many others lost to the water. Every year, on the anniversary of the disaster, a ghost train is said to appear above the former location of the bridge, reliving its final, deadly journey. Not only has the train been seen, but so have the terrified screams of long-dead passengers as they plummet into the icy waters below.



REMEMBER THE GREEN CROSS CODE

Visiting haunted roads may sound like an ideal spooky day trip, but remember to keep your wits about you. Many of these roads are motorways with high-speed traffic and few stopping places, so to avoid becoming a road ghost yourself, perhaps stick to admiring them from afar!

A WARNING TO THE WISE

There are worldwide reports of haunted bridges, but why? We can't help but imagine supernatural horrors hiding in the shadows of the most ordinary structures. From trolls to the Devil himself, stories of roadside horrors keep us safe and reluctant to enter places inhabited by dangerous beings – both living and dead.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

THE SPECTRES OF OLD SMOKY

With 900 years of history, Scotland's capital has seen its share of macabre and mysterious, leading to it being called one of the most haunted cities in Britain

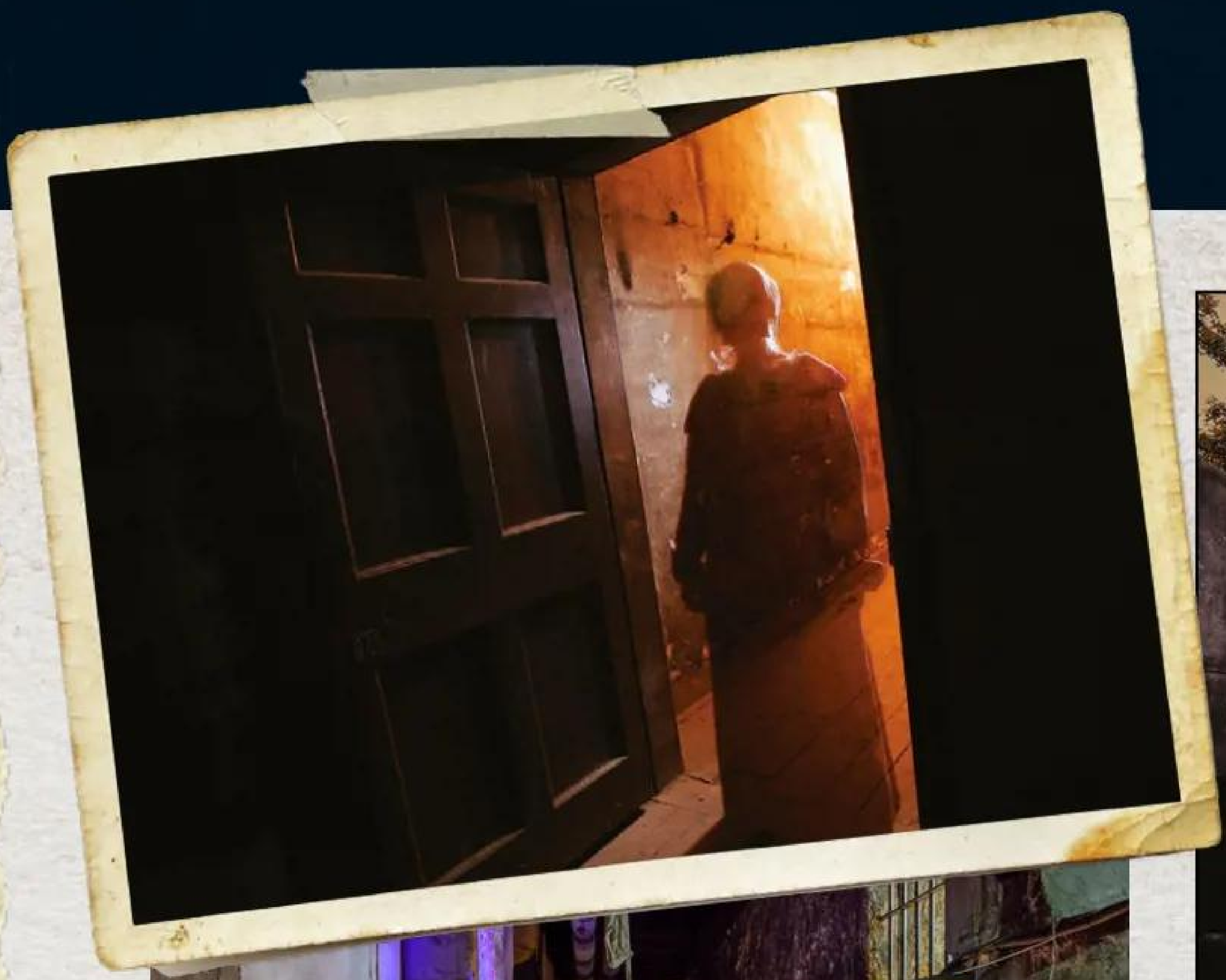
Location:
Edinburgh, Scotland

Tip: Book yourself on one of the city's many ghost tours, and take a day trip to Loch Ness (p125).

Edinburgh has a rich history full of scandal, crime, and more importantly to us, hauntings. Its dimly lit, narrow streets and Gothic architecture is home to many ghost stories, and these historic haunted spots are all worth exploring. The South Bridge Vaults, sometimes called the Edinburgh Vaults, were originally built in 1785 to be used as storage space for merchants and to house workshops for cobblers as well as taverns. These were poorly constructed, however; leaks were common and this caused the vaults to deteriorate quickly after they opened so the businesses abandoned them around the 1820s. The living conditions inside were poor as flooding was common and visibility was low. This left the space unoccupied and as such, crime began to rise in the vaults. A series of tunnels underneath the city made it ideal for hiding certain activities. The homeless population began using it for shelter, gangs distilled whiskey, and brothels began operating in the space. Bodies would be dumped in the vaults and bodysnatchers were known for roaming the tunnels. During the Great Fire of Edinburgh in 1824, smoke made its way through the ventilation shafts of the vaults and suffocated those inside that had hoped to find shelter from the fire. Those that didn't die from the smoke were cooked in the intense heat. It's also believed that notorious bodysnatchers Burke and Hare roamed the vaults looking for victims, however no evidence has been found to support these claims.

Under the bustling streets of Edinburgh's Old Town lies Mary King's Close. What was once a hub of trade in the city is now buried

THE WITCHES' WELL

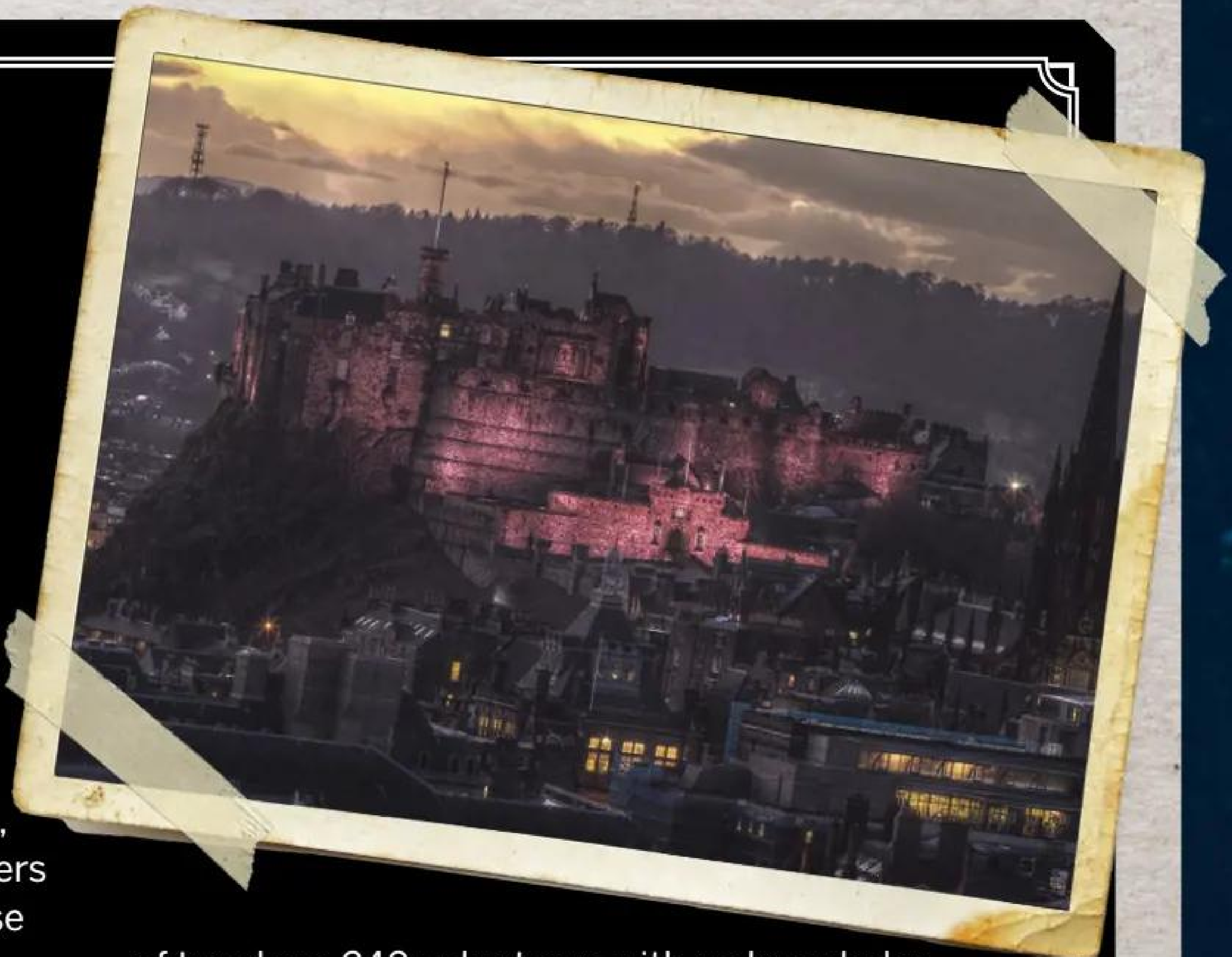


under the Royal Exchange. It was closed to the public for many years, giving it an air of mystery that spawned rumours and urban legends. Countless stories of it being haunted have been reported for hundreds of years. The nearby loch was used for dumping waste, the pollution from which is thought to have caused a supernatural glow in the night, leading to reports of ghostly visions.

To the south of Mary King's Close, shadowed by Edinburgh Castle, is Greyfriars Kirkyard. Established in the late 16th century, the graveyard is said to be one of the most haunted spots in the city – discover more on page 62. Also in the shadow of the castle, at the bottom of the Esplanade, lies the Witches' Well. The small water fountain features a relief of two heads, one evil and one good, caught within a snake, and it honours the approximately 4,000 people who were accused of being a witch and burned at the stake between the 15th and 18th century. The number of people accused of being a witch in Scotland was significantly higher than in neighbouring countries, as King James VI was personally involved. He believed that he was the victim of witchcraft and was paranoid about the potential harm that witches could do. If you want to learn more about Scotland's history with witchcraft and the occult, it is only a ten-minute walk from the Witches' Well to the Museum of Magic, Fortune-telling & Witchcraft (see page 130). The museum houses various items covering all aspects of magic, dating from the 17th century to today, and tells the story of the witch trials in Scotland and the country's folklore. The museum also offers walking tours around the city and personal tarot readings.

EDINBURGH CASTLE

Castlehill



Set foot in the grounds of Edinburgh Castle and you might hear the soft whistle of pipes, seemingly playing from right beneath your feet. This tune is apparently the haunting memory of the Lone Piper, who disappeared on an errand hundreds of years ago. Upon discovering secret tunnels under the castle, a young boy was sent to investigate. Instructed to play his pipes continually, the piper stepped in, his pipes a sign of his progress. When his music suddenly stopped, a search party was sent in – but there was no sign of the boy.

Just one of the many ghosts to haunt Edinburgh Castle, it is no wonder the area is considered to be so haunted. The site where Edinburgh Castle stands was inhabited long before the chapel dedicated to Saint Margaret was built in the 12th century. As long ago as 850 BCE, the area has been home to settlements, with a defensive fortress standing during the Iron Age. The castle that now stands features buildings constructed between the 12th and 18th century, but while it started life as a royal residence, it was later turned into a prison and an army garrison. Its dungeons, however, led the castle to notoriety. Here, prisoners were kept tucked away and often forgotten. These forgotten prisoners have appeared to visitors in the form of cold spots, shadows and unexplained moving objects.

Another common spectre is the headless drummer boy, who appears when the castle is facing danger – the first reporting of the boy was in 1650, before Cromwell attacked. The castle is also allegedly haunted by dogs, whose phantom forms roam the dog cemetery. An investigation launched by Dr Wiseman of the University of Hertfordshire in 2001 confirmed that there were some peculiar goings-on at Edinburgh Castle. Over the course of ten days, 240 volunteers with no knowledge of the castle's paranormal history were sent into both reputedly haunted areas of the castle, as well as places where no paranormal activity has been reported, with equipment to detect or record evidence of their experiences. The results were incredible – apparitions were spotted, and some sceptics reported that there was a kind of physical contact in the vaults and tunnels. Dr Wiseman, who had previously claimed that he didn't "believe" in ghosts, explained ambiguously, "I'm closer to being a lot more curious".

Image source: Getty; Alamy;

CREEPY CASTLES

There are over 4,000 castles around the UK, some of which feature tales of white ladies, gruesome murders, and green lady ghosts that bring doom to witnesses...

WINDSOR

Location: Windsor, England

As Europe's oldest inhabited castle, Windsor Castle understandably has its fair share of royal ghosts. Elizabeth I favours the Royal Library, while George III appeared to a group of guards as his body lay in state. Henry VIII groans in the deanery cloisters, dragging his feet, while Charles I haunts a house in the grounds. Spectral footsteps ring out in the cloisters and Curfew Tower stairs, and a Royalist prisoner lurks in the Norman Tower. Perhaps the saddest ghost is an 18-year-old Grenadier Guard who shot himself on the Long Walk in 1927, and appeared to his colleagues in the following weeks.

Above: The Upper Ward and Round Tower of Windsor Castle, viewed from the Long Walk, where the guard shot himself

TIP

Try to see the ghost of Herne the Hunter in Windsor Great Park. In one legend, Herne was a gamekeeper, and he'd hung himself from an oak tree that he continues to haunt. Watch out for a chap on horseback with huge antlers – you can't miss him...

BERRY POMEROY

Location: Totnes, England

Berry Pomeroy Castle in Devon dates to 1496 and is home to the famous Blue Lady. According to legend, she murdered her child, a product of incest, condemning herself to eternity trapped on Earth. As a ghost, she wears a blue cloak and calls to men for help before trying to push them off the ramparts. People also report seeing a blue light in St Margaret's Tower while a baby wails. A white lady also appears on the stairs to the dungeon and on the wall walk, radiating malevolence. Visitors have also heard mysterious whispers and been pushed by invisible hands.

Below: Berry Pomeroy Castle, abandoned in the late 17th century, although currently owned by the Duke of Somerset

Image source: Adobe Stock, Getty, Alamy

PENGERSICK

Location: Penzance, England

This popular wedding venue supposedly plays host to around 20 ghosts, with a demon trapped in the tower. The violent Henry Pengersick built the castle in the 14th century and his wife, Engrina, apparently haunts the main bedroom. Guests have seen a phantom woman stare out of the window in the early hours, before writhing in agony on the bed. Another woman walks through the wall and mounts a vigil by her side. A spectral black cat named Alexander chases ghost rats around the grounds, while a ghostly little girl, a shadowy monk, and a grey lady also roam the castle.

Right: This 15th-century tower is all that's left of an earlier incarnation of Pengersick Castle, which appeared on *Most Haunted* in 2003

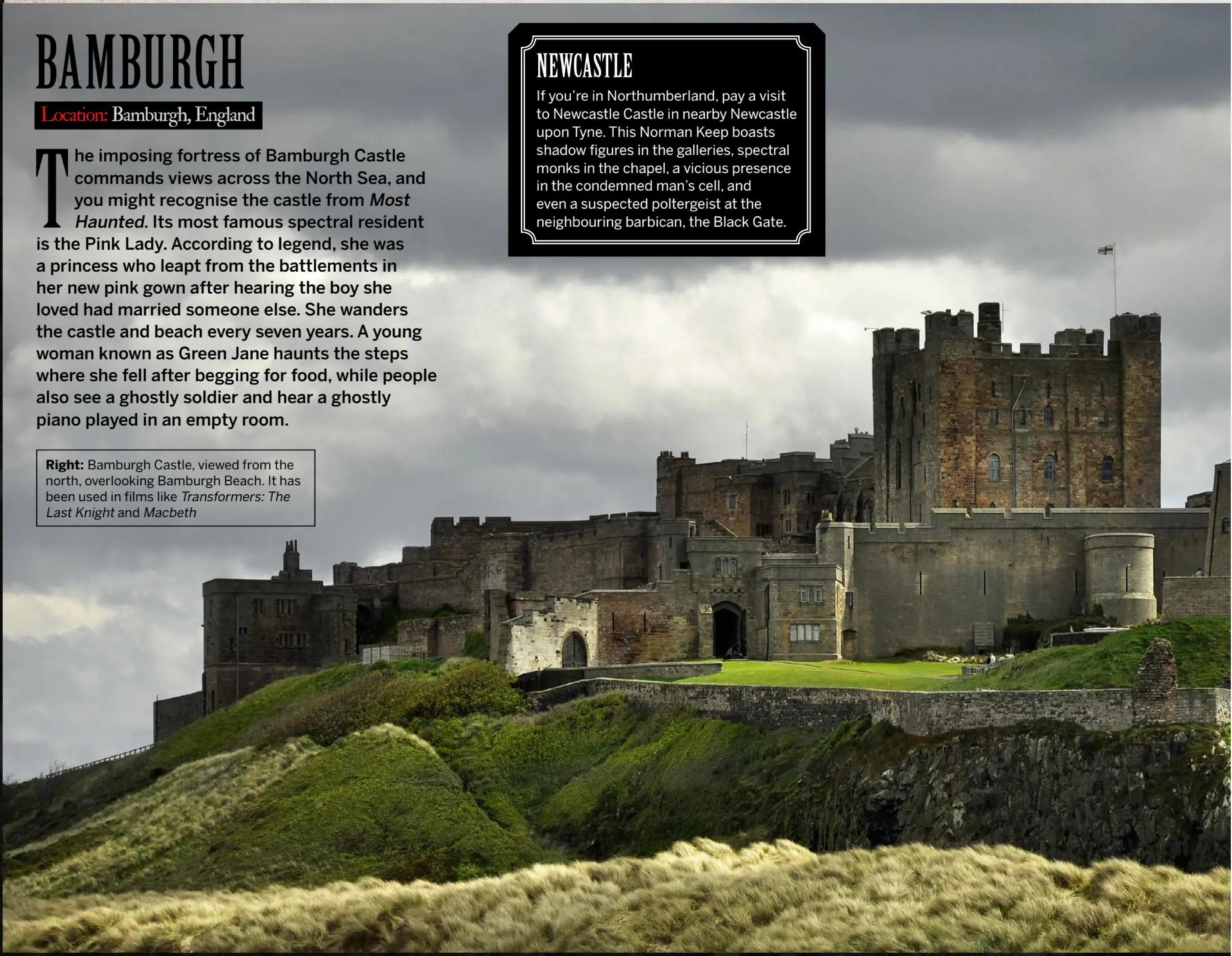
BAMBURGH

Location: Bamburgh, England

The imposing fortress of Bamburgh Castle commands views across the North Sea, and you might recognise the castle from *Most Haunted*. Its most famous spectral resident is the Pink Lady. According to legend, she was a princess who leapt from the battlements in her new pink gown after hearing the boy she loved had married someone else. She wanders the castle and beach every seven years. A young woman known as Green Jane haunts the steps where she fell after begging for food, while people also see a ghostly soldier and hear a ghostly piano played in an empty room.

NEWCASTLE

If you're in Northumberland, pay a visit to Newcastle Castle in nearby Newcastle upon Tyne. This Norman Keep boasts shadow figures in the galleries, spectral monks in the chapel, a vicious presence in the condemned man's cell, and even a suspected poltergeist at the neighbouring barbican, the Black Gate.



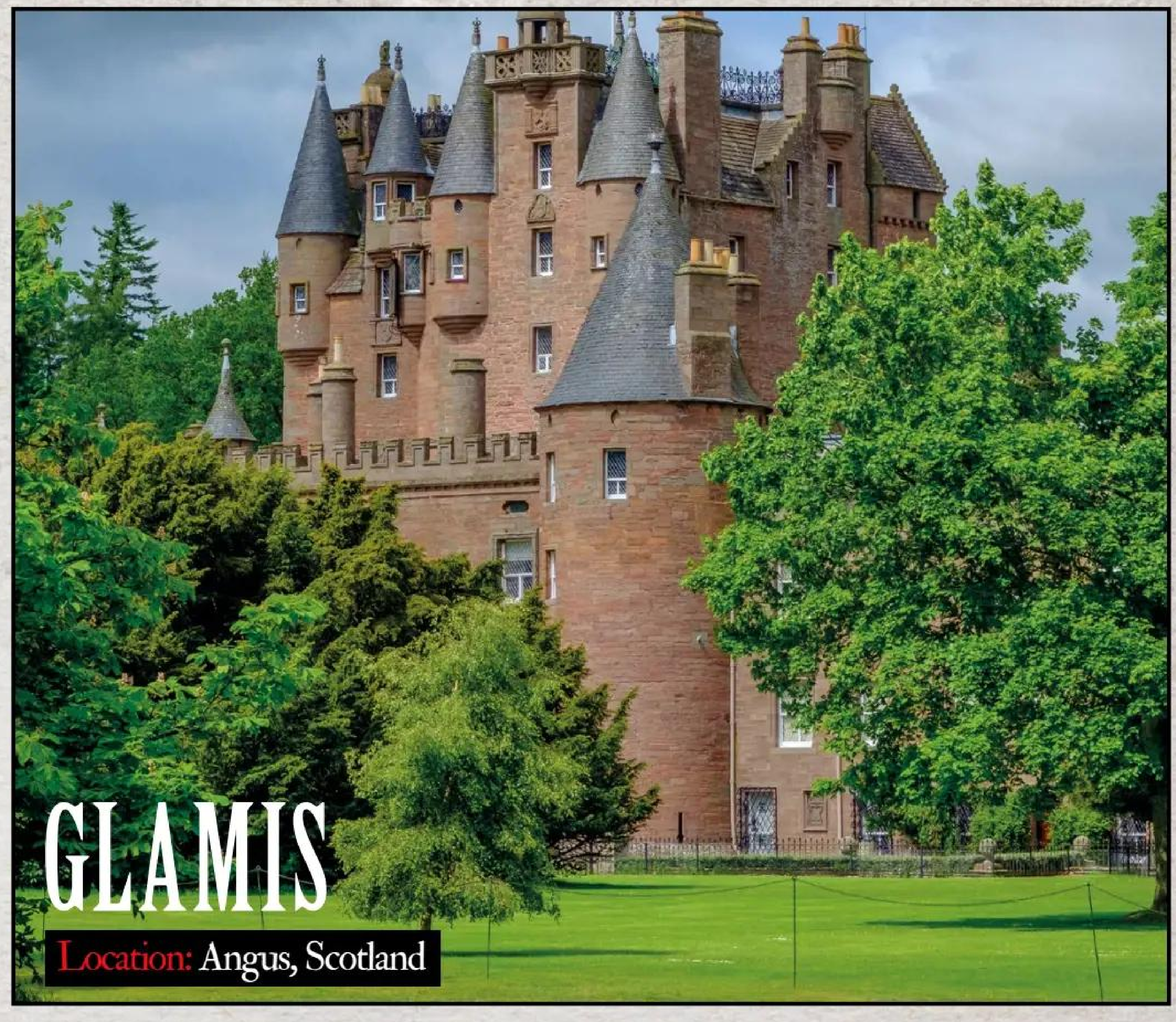
Right: Bamburgh Castle, viewed from the north, overlooking Bamburgh Beach. It has been used in films like *Transformers: The Last Knight* and *Macbeth*

Image source: Getty; Alamy

CHILLINGHAM

Location: Chillingham, England

The 13th-century Chillingham Castle claims to be one of Britain's most haunted castles. The best-known spectre is the Blue Boy, or Radiant Boy, who cried in the Pink Room, before appearing in 17th-century blue clothes. The Grey Lady is believed to be Lady Mary Berkeley, abandoned by her husband for her sister. People hear the rustle of her silk dress and feel a bone-deep chill as she passes. A white lady also appears in the pantry, begging for water, and some think she was poisoned. Other witnesses hear voices in an otherwise-empty chapel, and phantom monks lurk in the grounds.



GLAMIS

Location: Angus, Scotland

The beautiful, romantic Glamis Castle is perhaps best known as the childhood home of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, and birthplace of Princess Margaret. However, it is also synonymous with several ghost stories as a result of its connections to Scotland's dark and bloody past and its mention in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

In the 11th century, Glamis was a royal hunting lodge where, in 1034, the Scottish king Malcolm II was either murdered or died after escaping a nearby battle. The castle remained in royal hands until 1372, when it was granted to Robert II's son-in-law, Sir John Lyon, Thane of Glamis, who replaced the lodge with a castle. The Lyon family remained close to the royal Stewarts until the 16th century, when James V, father of Mary Queen of Scots, had Janet Douglas, wife of the Sixth Lord Glamis, arrested for treason and witchcraft and burnt at the stake in Edinburgh Castle in July 1537. After such a violent end, it's no wonder many people believe that the mysterious 'Grey Lady' who haunts the chapel and clock tower at Glamis is the wraith of the unfortunate Lady Janet.

Meanwhile, the West Tower of the castle is supposedly haunted by the spectre of Earl Beardie, said to be Alexander Lindsay, Fourth Earl of Crawford, a man of such evil character that on at least one occasion he hunted one of his own servants before setting his dogs on the unfortunate man – who is also said to haunt the castle. According to legend, when the Earl and his cronies committed sacrilege by playing cards on the Sabbath, it attracted the Devil's attention, who disguised himself as a gambler and won the Earl's soul, forcing him to play cards for eternity.

Perhaps the most troubling legend associated with the castle is that of the Monster of Glamis, who is said to have been the true heir to the earldom but was so deformed that his parents had him raised in secret in one of the castle's many hidden rooms. According to legend, an unfortunate maidservant accidentally saw the boy and had her tongue cut out to ensure that she could never tell anyone else – eventually becoming yet another one of the castle's many ghosts herself, with more than one visitor claiming to have seen a spectral woman with a bleeding mouth. It's said that the identity of the 'monster' is passed on to every heir to the earldom when he comes of age, with the Queen Mother's own father once reportedly saying: "If you could even guess the nature of this castle's secret, you would get down on your knees and thank God it was not yours".

Image source: Getty; Alamy, Wiki

MUNCASTER

Location: Ravenglass, England

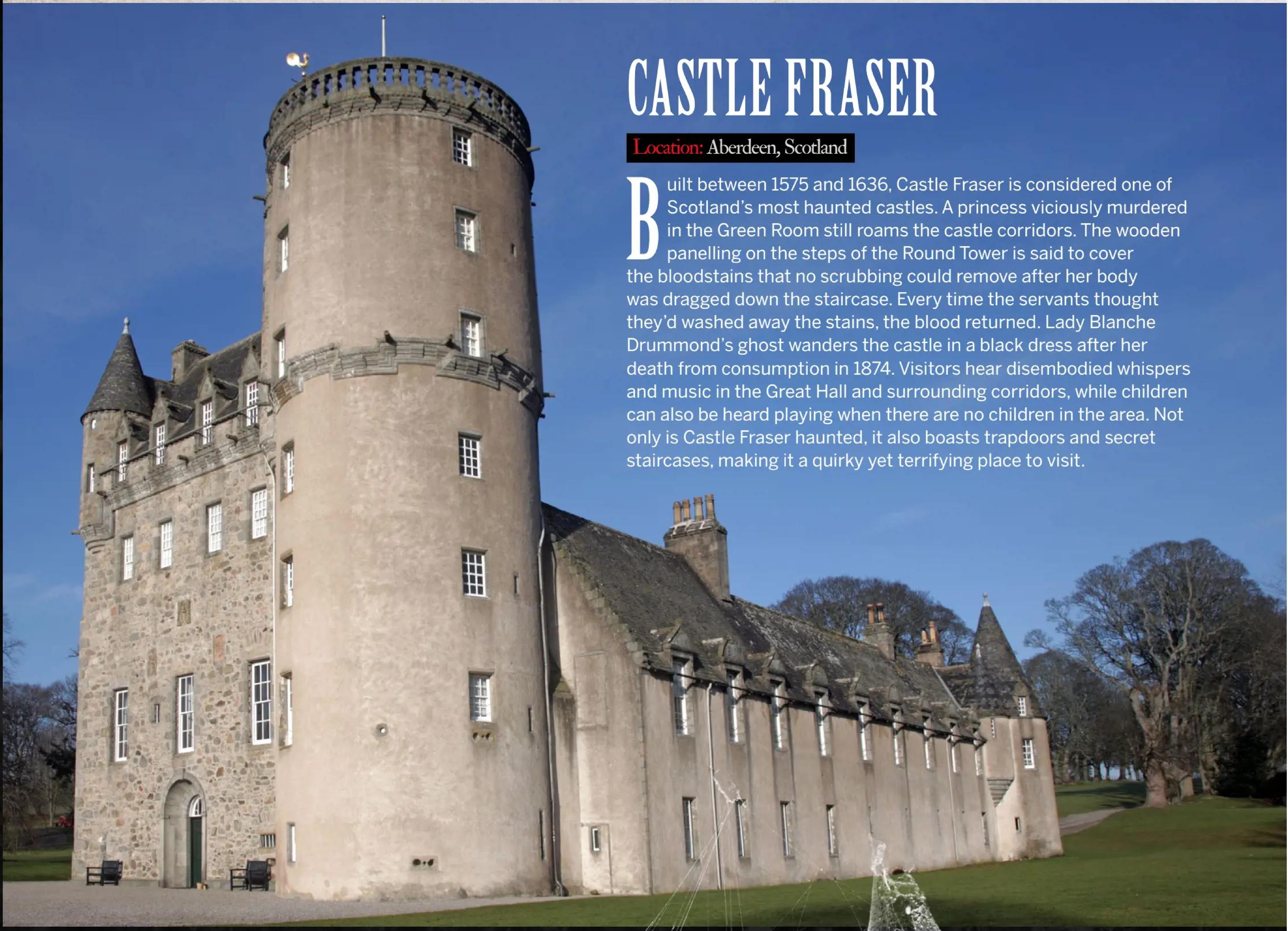
Muncaster's origins lie in the early 13th century, and the Pennington family have owned it for over 800 years. The former nursery, now called the Tapestry Room, is favoured by visitors, who report invisible rustling skirts, a crying baby, and a dark figure who vanishes into thin air. People sometimes hear the sounds of Tom Skelton, a 16th-century jester, dragging the body of a local carpenter down the stairs, and the wail of the carpenter's grief-stricken lover in the castle. A local housekeeper, Mary Bragg, was murdered nearby after falling in love with a castle footman and still wanders Muncaster's grounds.

Below: Muncaster Castle has been the subject of scientific research since 1992 as investigators seek to explain the tales of hauntings

CASTLE FRASER

Location: Aberdeen, Scotland

Built between 1575 and 1636, Castle Fraser is considered one of Scotland's most haunted castles. A princess viciously murdered in the Green Room still roams the castle corridors. The wooden panelling on the steps of the Round Tower is said to cover the bloodstains that no scrubbing could remove after her body was dragged down the staircase. Every time the servants thought they'd washed away the stains, the blood returned. Lady Blanche Drummond's ghost wanders the castle in a black dress after her death from consumption in 1874. Visitors hear disembodied whispers and music in the Great Hall and surrounding corridors, while children can also be heard playing when there are no children in the area. Not only is Castle Fraser haunted, it also boasts trapdoors and secret staircases, making it a quirky yet terrifying place to visit.



Right: Rait Castle was built by Scottish supporters of Edward I, often referred to as the Hammer of the Scots

RAIT

Location: Inverness, Scotland

This castle was the subject of bitter rivalry between feuding families, which saw the Cummings family seek to murder the Mackintosh clan at a feast. Someone warned the Mackintoshes about the plot and they went armed to the feast. When the Cummings went to draw swords, the Mackintoshes launched their counter-attack. In the melee, the Cummings clan chief attacked his own daughter, believing her to be the one who warned the Mackintoshes since her lover was among the rival family. He slashed off her hands as she tried to escape out of a window, and her handless ghost now roams the ruin.

HERMITAGE

Location: Newcastleton, Scotland

Hermitage Castle's most famous owner was Sir William de Soulis, immortalised in legend as an evil sorcerer who conjured a redcap as a familiar, called Redcap Sly. If you believe the stories, King Robert Bruce agreed to Lord Soulis's execution to satisfy the terrified locals, with Lord Soulis wrapped in lead and boiled alive. In reality, Lord Soulis was executed for his part in an assassination plot against Robert. People believe Lord Soulis's malicious phantom still lurks in the castle, its stone walls echoing with the cries of tormented children, yet Redcap Sly is a far more dangerous prospect. Redcaps are vicious creatures that need to keep their caps wet with fresh blood, so they'd kill intruders in their castles and dip their caps in the blood. They can outrun any victim and only making the sign of the cross or quoting scripture at them can keep you safe.

DELGATIE

Location: Turriff, Scotland

Built in the 11th century, Delgatie Castle hosted soldiers during the Second World War. While there, they reported seeing a ghostly red-haired figure, believed to be a woman named Rohaise, who is linked with the Rohaise Room. People also hear taps, footsteps and knocks in the room, and the sound of a woman humming is more obvious if young men are present. A monk appeared to the owner's daughter in a nightmare, and she woke insisting that a body had been encased in a wall. Excavations in a bedroom wall uncovered a skeleton clad in black cloth. Rather than setting the monk to rest, his activity ramped up so much that they called in a minister to exorcise the spirit.

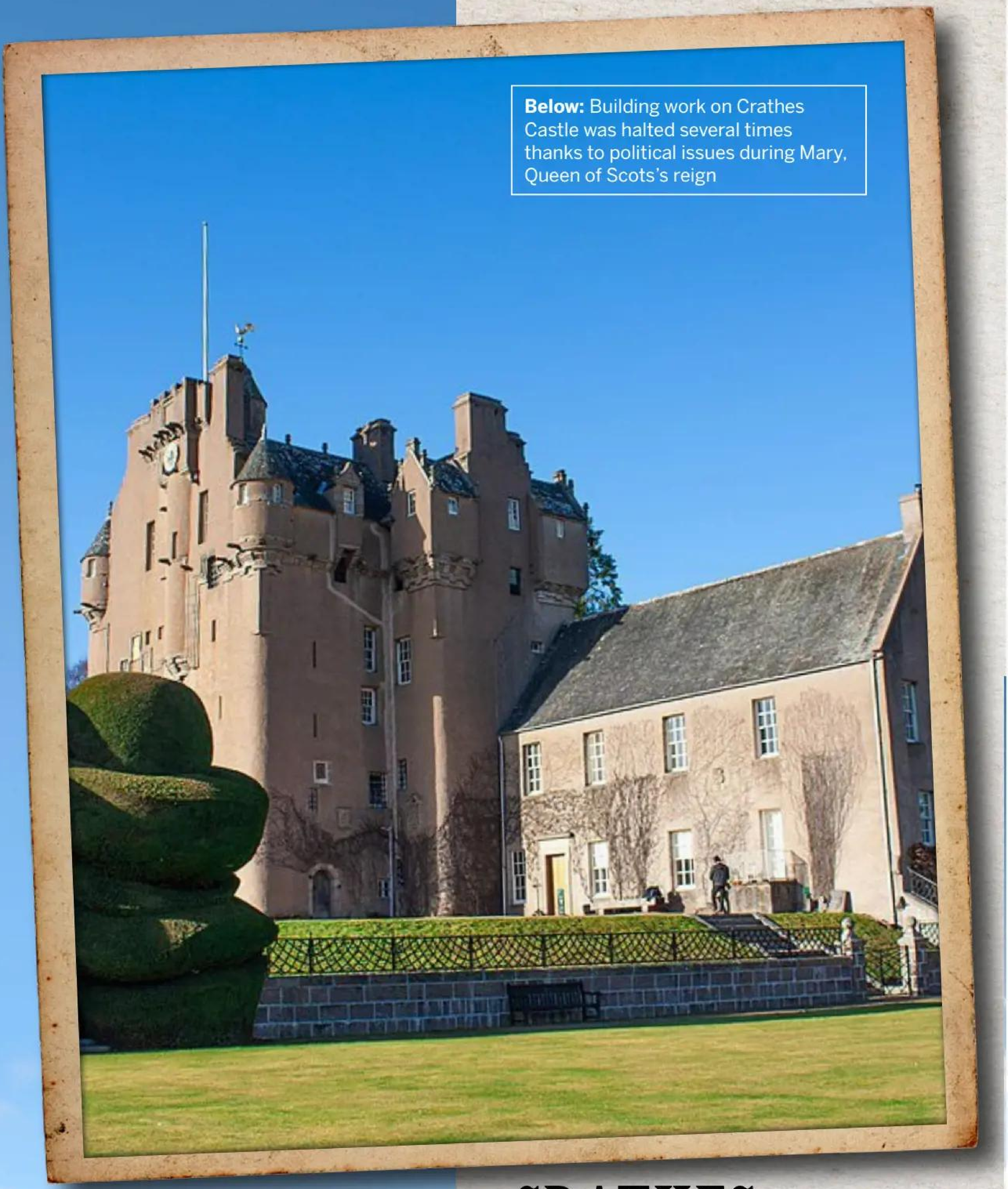
Image source: Getty; Alamy; Wiki

STIRLING

Location: Stirling, Scotland

Stirling Castle has been attacked 16 times, so ghosts are almost a given. The most famous ghost is the Green Lady, believed to have been one of Mary, Queen of Scots's servants. One night, a fire started in the Queen's room, and while the servant got the Queen to safety, the maid's green dress caught fire and she died. The Green Lady brings doom to whoever sees her. Stirling Castle also has a Pink Lady, who may be a war widow looking for her husband or a woman killed by bodysnatchers. A Black Lady wanders the back walk, and you'll never see another dawn if you look in her eyes. Another ghost patrols an upper area where battlements once existed, and officers in the room below heard footsteps above them. Visitors also often mistake a ghost dressed in full Highland regalia for a tour guide, only realising their error when he vanishes.

Above: Stirling Castle, viewed from the King's Knot area, looking roughly northward to the castle, once home to Mary, Queen of Scots



Below: Building work on Crathes Castle was halted several times thanks to political issues during Mary, Queen of Scots's reign

CRATHES

Location: Banchory, Scotland

The 16th-century Crathes Castle is most famous for its green lady, a young woman in green who stands by the fireplace holding a baby. Even Queen Victoria witnessed this apparition, and contemporary visitors still report sensations of dread or extreme cold upon entering the room. Renovations in the 19th century revealed the skeletons of a woman and child under that same fireplace. A family in 2016 thought they'd captured the green lady in the background of a photo. A white lady also haunts the tower on the anniversary of her death, believed to have been poisoned by her potential mother-in-law.

Above: Tulloch Castle is now a hotel, making it easy for you to find out for yourself how haunted it is

TULLOCH

Location: Dingwall, Scotland

A castle has stood on this site since at least 1116, and it's been neglected, rebuilt and restored several times. A green lady appears on the spiral staircase, even showing up in a photo from 2012, and the teenaged Lady Elizabeth Davidson fell to her death down these stairs after catching her father in bed with a maid. Possibly the same maid paces around the building muttering, while two teenage girls also haunt the castle, apparently pressing down on guests' chests during the night. Other guests have seen orbs, heard disembodied footsteps, and been shocked by tapping on third-floor windows.

Right: A view of the 13th-century Caerphilly Castle from the south. Ruined in the 16th century, later restoration took place after the 1770s

CAERPHILLY

Location: Caerphilly, Wales

Caerphilly's most famous ghost is that of French princess Alice of Angouleme. She had a secret relationship with Gruffudd the Fair, except Alice's husband, the castle's builder Gilbert de Clare, found out. He executed Gruffudd and dispatched Alice back to France, where she died of grief at her lover's death. Her ghost now appears at Caerphilly Castle wearing a green dress, most often on the ramparts. People have also seen ghostly men-at-arms on the battlements, while a mysterious red figure drifts by. An older woman, the Gwrach-y-rhibyn, appears to warn of impending danger to the de Clare family.

GREEN LADY GHOSTS

Household helpers or omens of doom?

Green lady ghosts are unique to the UK, commonly found in Scotland but sometimes in Wales. Some think they are members of the fairy folk, benevolent spirits who guard the homes they haunt after being shown kindness by the owners. Other green ladies are women who died wearing a green dress and are then doomed to sport that colour forever. Some green ladies wear emerald gowns, while others are figures that appear with a green hue instead. Sometimes their sightings are an omen of imminent danger to the castle or its owners, such as the green ladies at Stirling and Crathes.

Image source: Getty; Wiki

GWRYCH

Location: Abergele, Wales

Wales is known as 'the land of castles' thanks to the fact that it has more castles per square mile than any other country in Europe, 427 of them in fact! Many date back to the Middle Ages and are riddled with phantoms, including the capital city's fortress, Cardiff Castle; Pembrokeshire's creepy Carew Castle; Caerphilly Castle; and the cursed Craig Y Nos. But the most eerie of all is Gwrych Castle, thanks to its extensive size and its forlorn appearance. Although one of the younger fortresses in Wales (it only dates back 200 years), it has been used as a site for reenactments and filming locations thanks to its imposing size. The castle has fallen into disrepair, however, with its once regal marble staircase being reclaimed by land, cold, empty rooms with peeling plaster and exposed entrances to once hidden passageways. Money earned from filming is going towards its preservation – but no amount of cash can rid the estate of its ghosts. The site is rumoured to be haunted by Countess Winifred, who died in 1924, as well as the ghost of a former servant girl who supposedly died falling off a horse, a lady in red or white, and numerous others. Many visitors have reported a strange feeling of being watched, bad vibes and hearing footsteps.

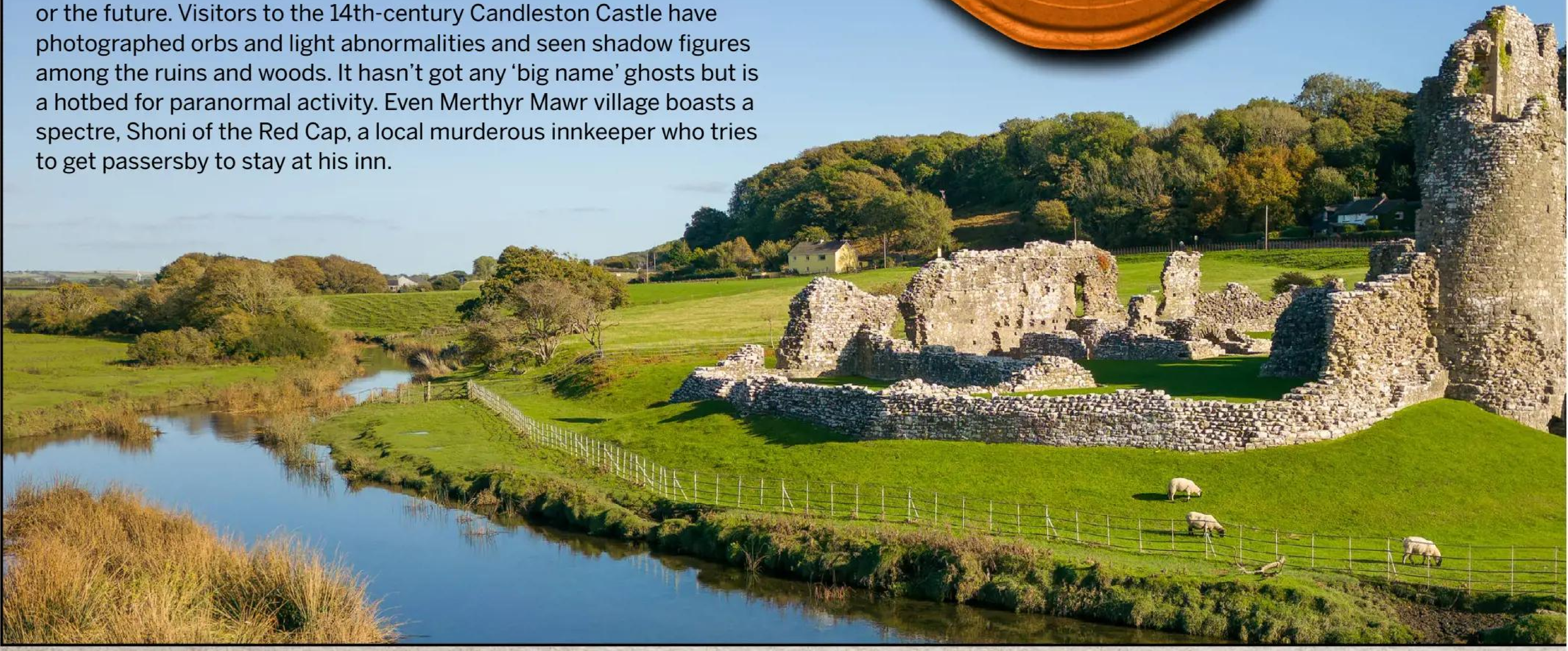
TIP

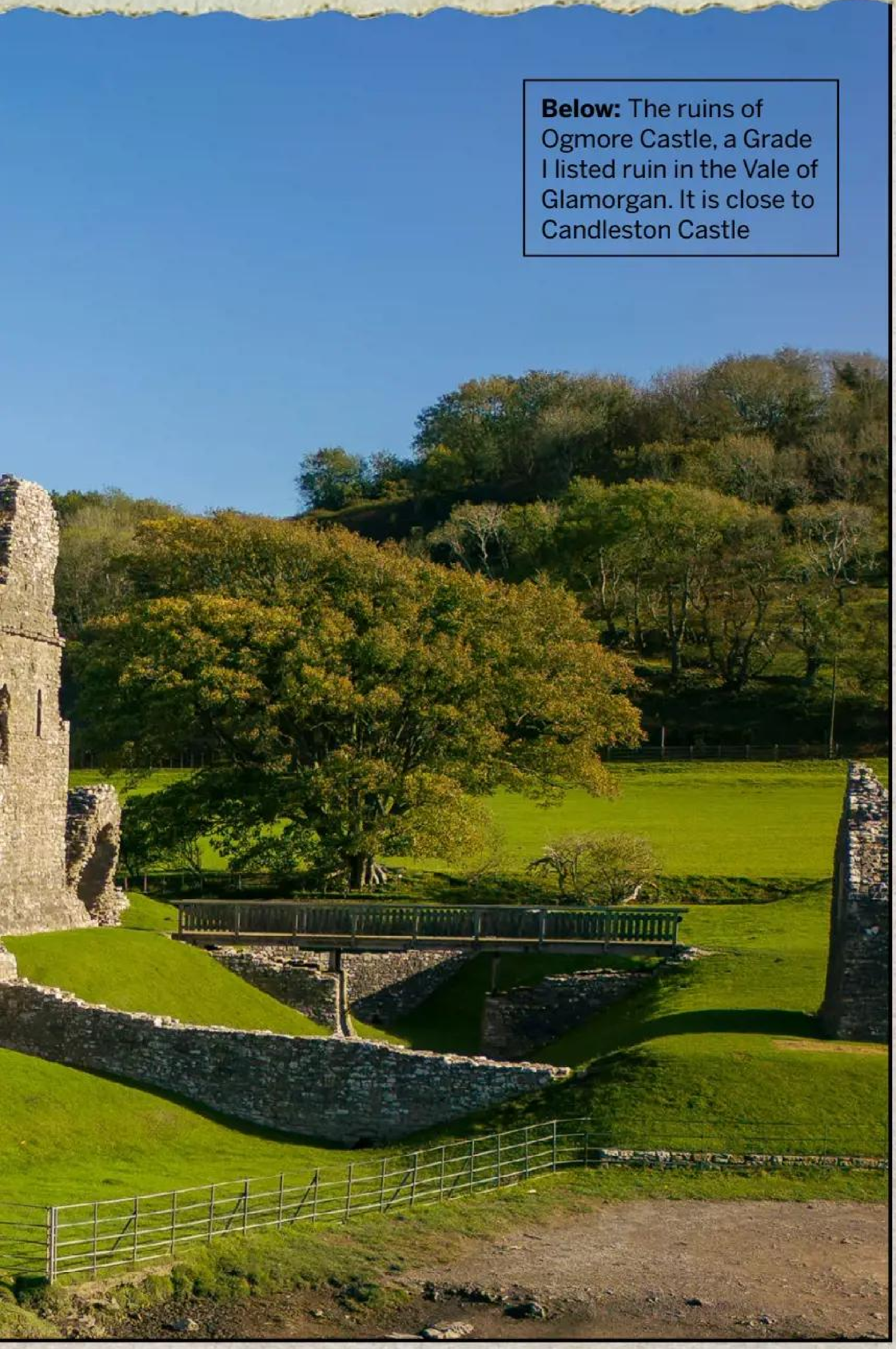
Book onto one of Gwrych Castle's regular ghost hunt nights where you will be provided with paranormal investigation equipment and can take part in table tipping and divination

OGMORE

Location: Merthyr Mawr, Wales

The area around Merthyr Mawr in Mid Glamorgan is a real treat for ghosthunters, since the village and the ruins of nearby Ogmore Castle and Candleston Castle are said to be haunted. A white lady (Y Ladi Wen) haunts the 12th-century Ogmore Castle, who according to legend, once revealed the location of treasure in the ruins to a local man. When he tried to take all the treasure, she killed him. If you fall asleep here, legend warns that you could wake up in either the past or the future. Visitors to the 14th-century Candleston Castle have photographed orbs and light abnormalities and seen shadow figures among the ruins and woods. It hasn't got any 'big name' ghosts but is a hotbed for paranormal activity. Even Merthyr Mawr village boasts a spectre, Shoni of the Red Cap, a local murderous innkeeper who tries to get passersby to stay at his inn.





Below: The ruins of Ogmore Castle, a Grade I listed ruin in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is close to Candleston Castle

CAREW

Location: Tenby, Wales

The 12th-century castle was expanded during the 16th century but was left to fall into ruin after the English Civil War. Carew Castle is home to a white lady believed to be an 11th-century princess named Nest. She's a kindly spirit who still enjoys welcoming visitors. A very different spirit that you don't want to meet is the phantom ape. According to legend, a 17th-century tenant brought him to the castle, before unleashing him on a merchant upset that his daughter had eloped with the tenant's son. The ape vanished, but its ghost appears in the castle during storms.

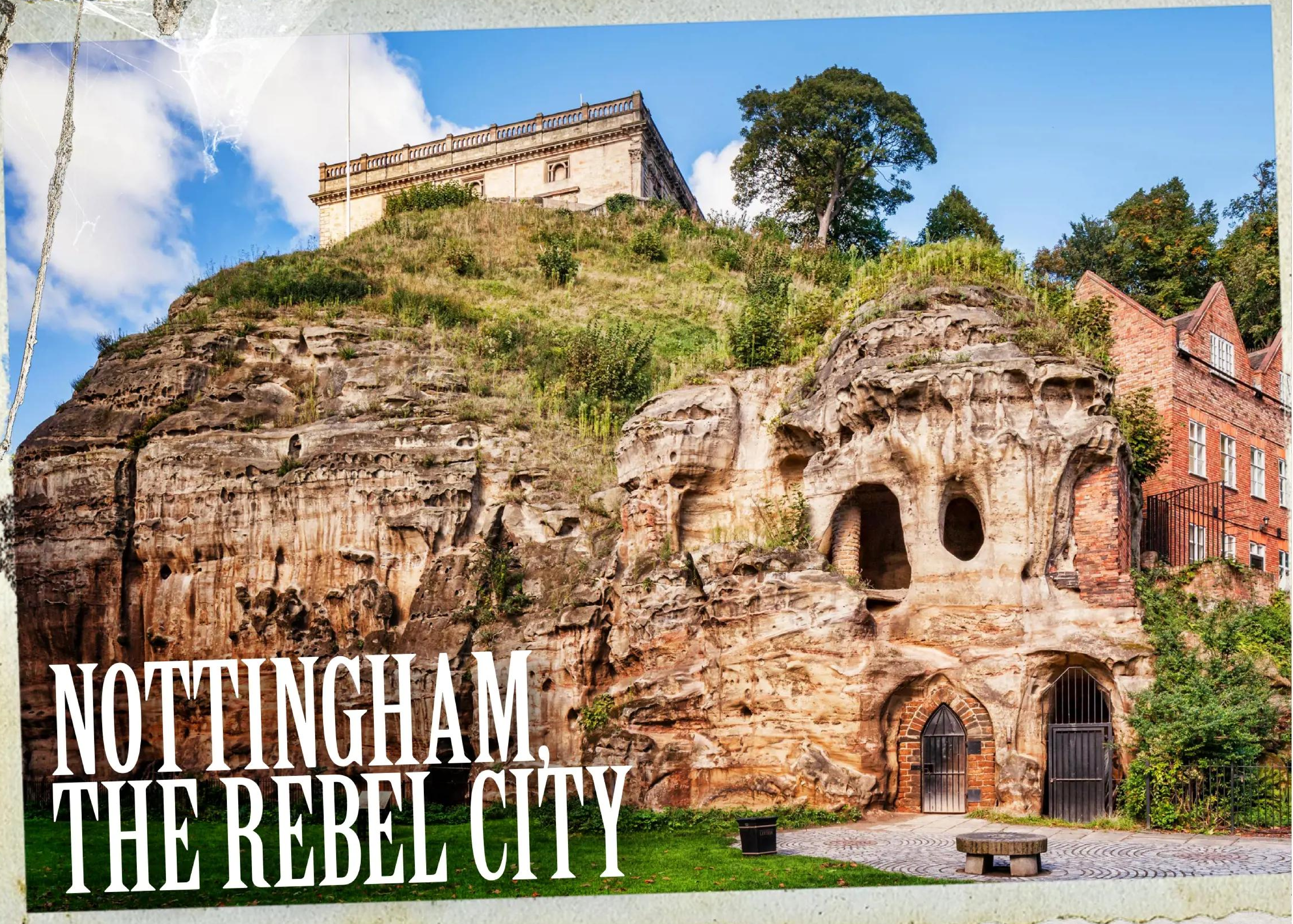
CRAIG Y NOS

Location: Swansea, Wales

Built in the 1840s, Craig Y Nos Castle has a colourful history, having been owned by 19th-century opera singer Adelina Patti, and acting as a tuberculosis hospital in the 1920s. It was also a hospital for the elderly until the 1980s. According to legend, Patti loved the castle so much that she's still there. Ghost hunters have played a record of her singing from the end of her career to anger her, provoking her into throwing items across the room. It seems she doesn't enjoy reminders of her voice as it faded. The castle is now a popular wedding venue.

GHOST
TOURS
OVERNIGHT
SLEEP IN
HAUNTED
LEVELS

Image source: Getty; Alamy, Wiki



NOTTINGHAM, THE REBEL CITY

Nottingham is a city rich with myths, legends and ghosts, where Merry Men take refuge in forests and ancient evils dwell beneath the pavement

Location:
Nottingham,
Nottinghamshire,
England

Tips: Nottingham's the perfect city for a haunted pub crawl. Be sure to end your evening at gothic-themed rock bar Pit & Pendulum for a suitably spooky night out!

Rising from humble origins in the 6th century to the sprawling metropolis of today, Nottingham is a city rich in history and myth. Known worldwide as the home of legendary hero Robin Hood, who stole from the rich to give to the poor, stories of daring deeds and strange happenings are interwoven with the fabric of the city. Also famous is Nottingham's enormous, human-made cave system, historically used for storage, industry, dwellings and some less-than-wholesome activities.

The City of Caves attraction guides visitors into the tunnels beneath Nottingham, some of which date back to the 9th century. The caves are a beloved paranormal location, home to several ghosts including a shadowy figure carrying a lantern, and a violent poltergeist known for throwing stones at visitors and producing a foul stench.

Now established as a musuem and art gallery, Nottingham Castle was once a seat of power and bloody political scandals. One brutal incident was in 1212, when King John imprisoned 28 sons of Welsh noblemen, holding them hostage until he ordered their execution. They were hanged one by one, with some of the boys being as young as 12. Their cries are said to still ring out today.

The National Justice Museum is a similarly fascinating place with a grizzly history of crime and punishment, reportedly haunted by former inmates, judges and an abrupt matron, keen to process you into the prison population. Meanwhile,

the Workhouse at Southwell is said to be haunted by former patients who never left the institution, while dark forces linger in the tunnels beneath. A modern haunt is the Museum of Curiosities (see page 128), a substantial museum stacked to the rafters with cursed objects, terrifying taxidermy and even a Victorian hearse.

The Victorian Gothic mansion of Kelham Hall was home to the Manners-Sutton family for over 400 years, with the hall boasting several famous houseguests, including King Charles I, who was briefly imprisoned there during the Civil War. During this period, he was closely guarded, save for a small path which he walked back and forth repeatedly. Some believe the beheaded King still returns to the hall, pacing with ghostly footsteps. Shadow figures and the smell of burning are often reported, as is the spirit of the Blue Lady, who is seen peering over a balcony before falling to her death.

Elizabethan Wollaton Hall has its own share of hauntings, yet the most curious supernatural reports are within its parkland. In 1979, a group of schoolchildren stumbled across an encampment of gnomes who wore pointed hats and drove tiny cars. The children watched for a while, before being chased by the perturbed imps.

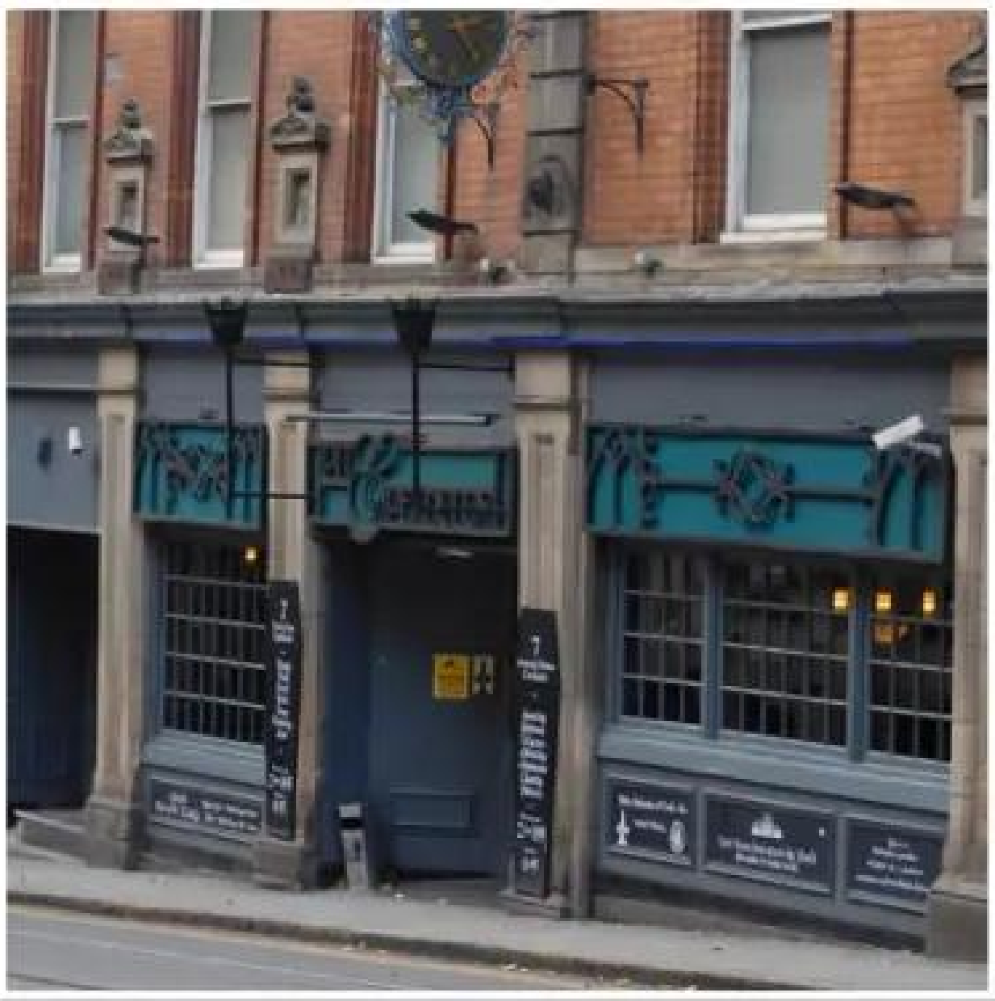
Sightseeing can be thirsty work, and a visit to Nottingham's haunted pubs should be at the top of your list. Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem is a favourite of many (even if its claims of being the oldest pub in England are, sadly, untrue), beloved for its ghosts and cursed model galleon. Protected by glass and thick with inches of dust, no-one is brave enough to clean the boat as the last people who did so, died within a year. The Old Salutation Inn is a similarly spooky destination, especially if you're lucky enough to visit the haunted caves beneath, while The Bell Inn is very busy with spirits, including two ghostly patrons who sit drinking at a table before mysteriously disappearing.

> "In 1979, a group of school children stumbled across an encampment of gnomes who drove tiny cars"

HIGH SPIRITS

Nottingham's gothic-themed pub has become a mecca for the city's alternative population

Located in the city centre, The Pit & Pendulum is a gothic-themed pub with a delightful horror twist. Spread over two floors, with toilets hidden behind a secret bookcase, the pub is a favourite for local alternative groups, and those attending nearby concerts. Famed for its '7 Deadly Sins' cocktails, the pub is said to have its own resident ghosts that can be seen sitting on tables downstairs, poking patrons or whispering in the men's bathroom.



Above: The Pit & Pendulum pub takes its name from an 1842 short story of the same name by Edgar Allen Poe

BEWARE OF NIGHTMARES

Bestwood Lodge was once a grand hunting lodge for the wealthy, but is now a beautiful hotel

Rumoured to be haunted by former lover of Charles II, Nell Gwyn, Bestwood Lodge Hotel is a grand Victorian building with 40 en-suite bedrooms on site. Guests who stay there often report the scent of oranges nearby – which is a sign of Nell's presence. But she's not the only spirit to reside among the patrons. Countless silent houseguests, who appear as shadows, have been seen walking the corridors. Then there are also several reports of guests interacting with undead staff, and rooms being plagued with waking nightmares.

Right: Nell Gwyn was an orange seller and actress before she caught the eye of the monarch. Perhaps she now haunts Bestwood

Image source: Getty; Alamy; Source : Wikipedia Commons / Bryn Holmes

RAISE YOUR SPIRITS!

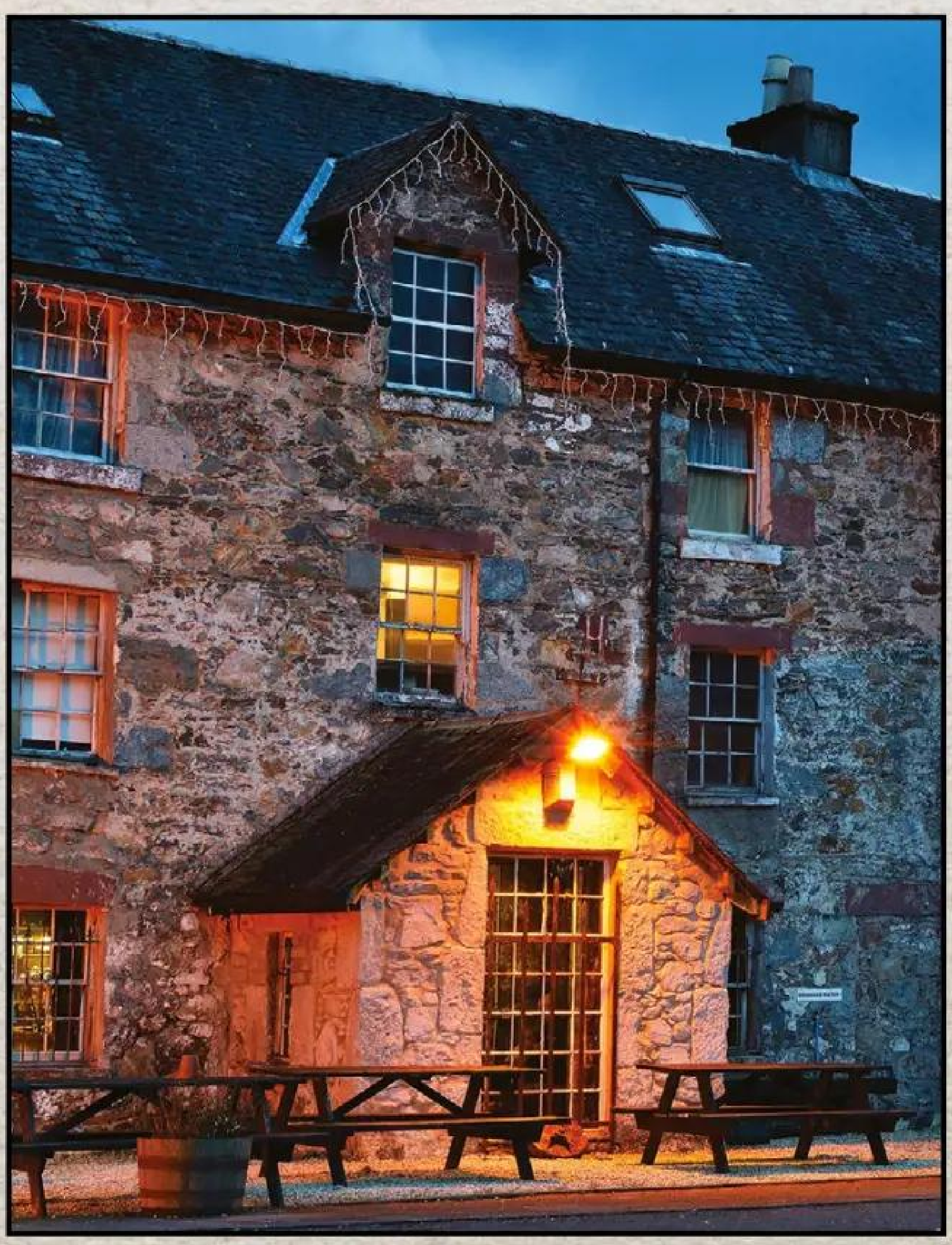
Whatever spirit you choose to chase, the UK's most haunted watering holes are sure to whet any serious ghost hunters' appetite. From the crags of Scotland, through the moors of England and into the mountains of Wales, explore the haunted mainland of the British isles the way our ancestors intended – with a pint in hand!

POOL & BEER UPSTAIRS
POOL & BEER UPSTAIRS
The Scotia

THE SCOTIA BAR

Location: Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Scotland

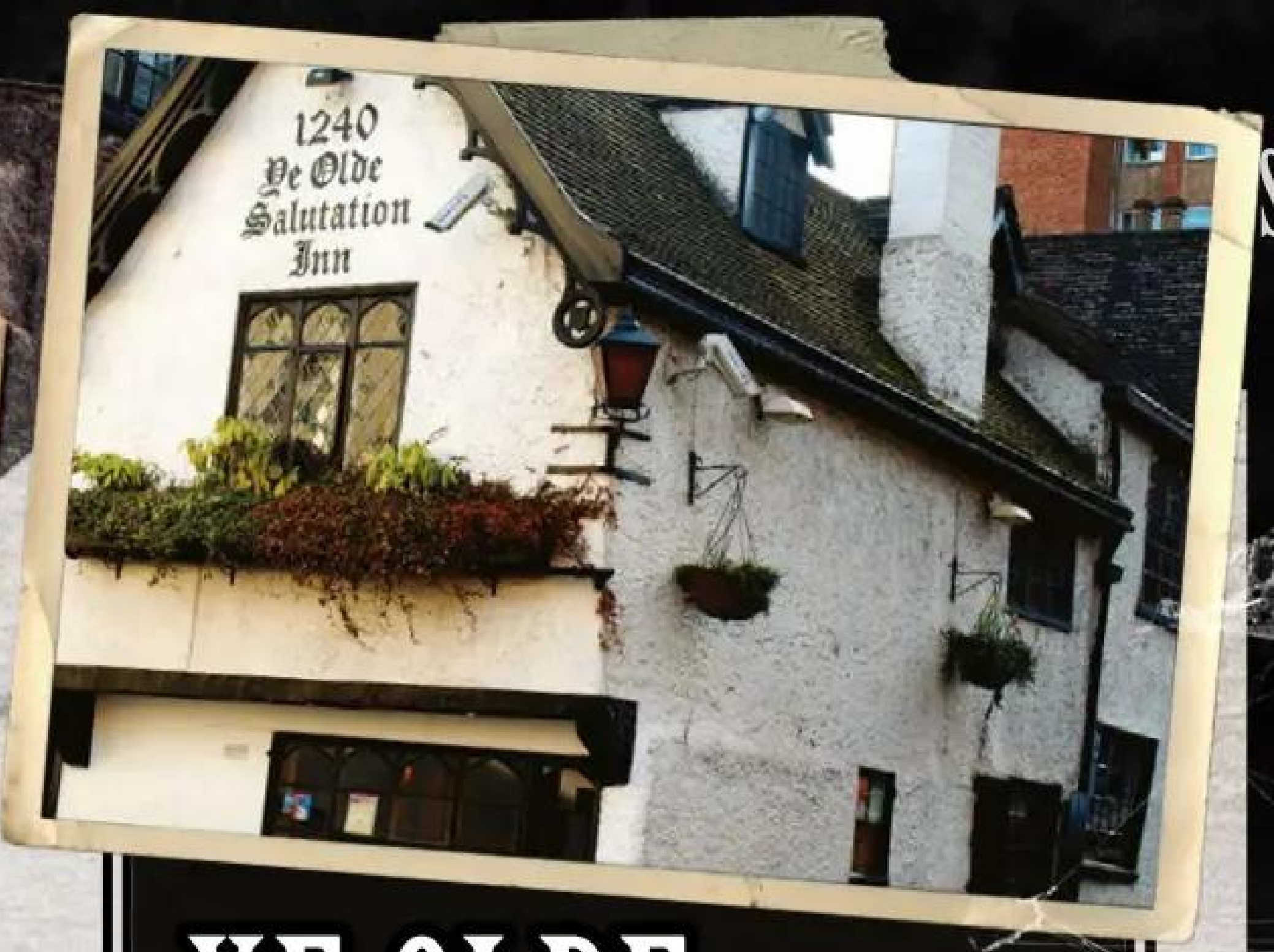
1 Standing proud on Stockwell Street since 1792, Glasgow's oldest surviving pub is home to a host of notable ghosties. Thought to be haunting this famous watering hole is a woman named Annie who moves glasses across the table. The pub's landlord has also reported seeing the ghost of a young child playing in a doorway. But most will recognise the name of the pub for the famous Green Lady, said to be a former barmaid who can be spotted parading up and down the bar in a green dress on many a dark and stormy night.



THE DROVERS INN

Location: Loch Lomond, Stirling, Scotland

2 Rumoured to be Britain's most haunted inn, those who have stayed at this rustic public house have reported numerous ghostly sightings. Many have spotted a young crofting family wandering the grounds nearby searching for the hotel. The family tragically froze to death in the late 18th Century having been turfed out of their home. Visitors have also reported sightings of a young child, said to have drowned in a lake nearby. A search party pulled her from the waters and lay her body in the hotel to allow her family time to grieve, but the little girl continues to look for the doll she lost in the water.



YE OLDE SALUTATION INN

Location: Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, England

3 Standing above a fascinating network of caves dating back to the 9th Century, this inn is home to at least three terrifying ghosts. One of the most famous is flower girl Rosie who according to legend was struck by a carriage outside the pub when she was only four or five. Transported down to the caves to keep her comfortable, she passed away before the local doctor could arrive.

THE TEN BELLS

Location: London, England

4 Serving pints since 1666, this was a regular watering hole for many victims of 'Jack The Ripper' who killed five women in 1888. The ghost of one of the victims, Annie Chapman, is said to still frequent the pub today. Another resident is the former landlord, who owned the pub in Victorian times, and was murdered with an axe. His ghost is said to be stalking the upper floors of the establishment.

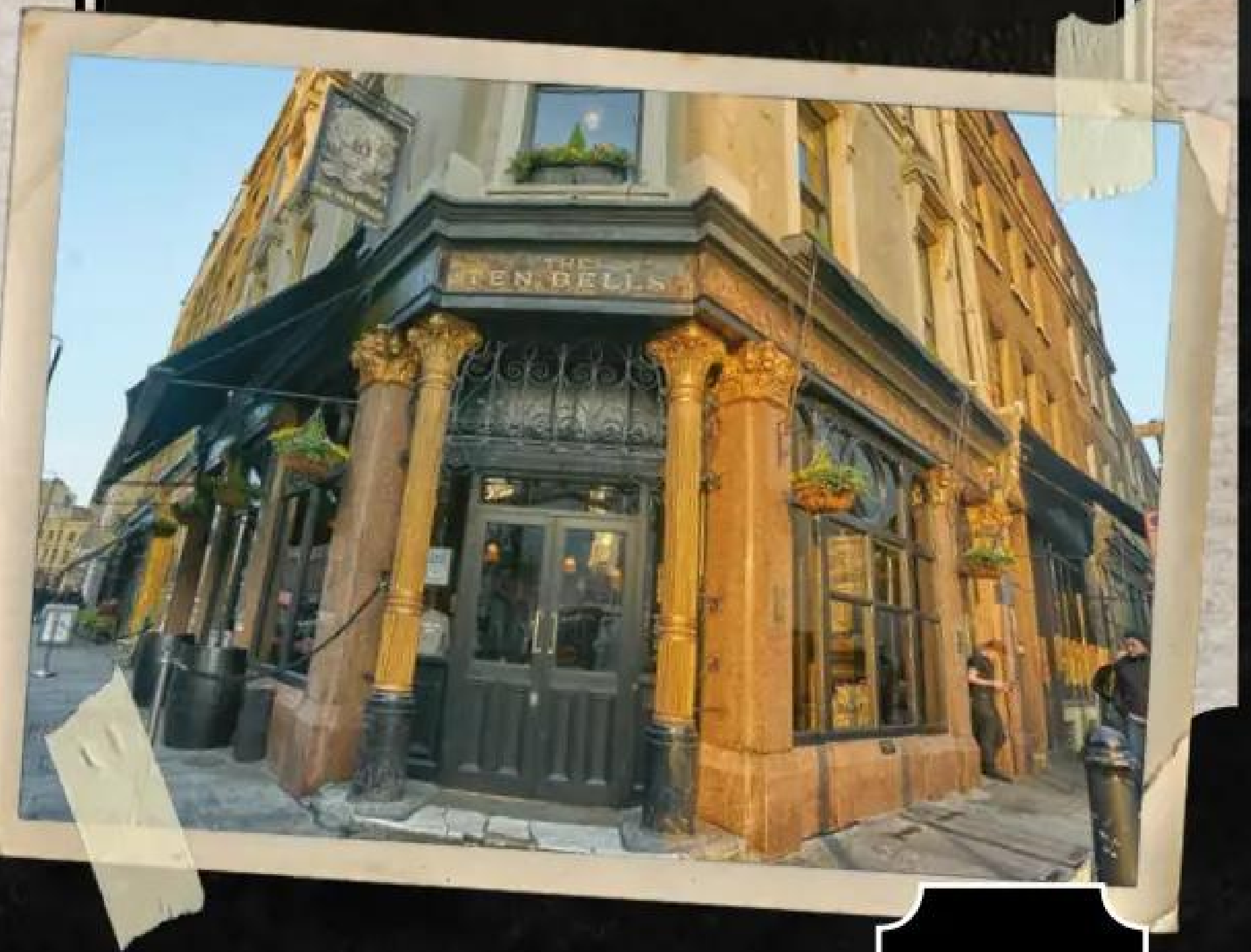


Image source: Getty; Alamy

MERMAID INN

Location: Rye, East Sussex, England

5 Nestled between the former home and walled garden of author, Henry James and the stunning 13th-century Rye Castle lies a ghost hunter's dream. The charismatic Mermaid Inn is home to winding tunnels, secret passageways, ominous wall carvings, crooked low-beam ceilings and some of the quirky rooms you can stay in even have their own supernatural star. Room One (James), belongs to a lady in white who sits in the chair by the fireplace. Room 10 (Fleur de Lys) is said to be haunted by a wacky man who enjoys spooking guests by walking through the bathroom wall into the main room. The most haunted of the 31 rooms is reportedly room 19, (Dr Syn's Bedchamber) haunted by an elderly man in old-fashioned clothes.

THE RED LION INN

Location: Pewsey, Wiltshire, England

6 A "stylish country pub with rooms", the Red Lion was originally built in the late 16th century as a farmhouse and became a coaching inn during the 19th century. Keeping watch over the inn is the phantom of a woman named Florrie, who was murdered in the 17th Century by her husband. Her remains were thrown into a well, which is now a glass-topped table inside the establishment, allowing a macabre peek into her final resting place. Supernatural sightings at The Red Lion Inn also include a headless horseman whose presence is announced by the echo of horse hooves. Guests who stay upstairs have also reported hearing children giggling in the night.

ANCIENT RAM INN

Location: Wotton-under-Edge., Gloucestershire, England

7 This Grade II-listed building and a former pub located in the picturesque village of Wotton-under-Edge was built on the site of an ancient pagan burial ground in 1145. Privately owned from the late 1960s until 2017, today the site hosts spooky sleepovers for paranormal enthusiasts. The most frequently encountered of the many ghosts reportedly haunting this home is the murdered maiden, Elizabeth, who was buried beneath the bar. The most haunted room in the house is thought to be the Bishop's room. Apparitions of monks have been seen on frequent occasions. In the old barn adjoining the building, unexplained tall dark shadows have seen people frozen to the spot with fear.

THE GEORGE HOTEL AND PILGRIMS INN

Location: Glastonbury, Somerset, England

8 Every 'most haunted' feature needs a love story, and this southwestern pub and guesthouse is the one. According to legend, at least two ghosts haunt this building. One of the ghosts is an elegant woman, and the other is a monk from the nearby Glastonbury Abbey. A German medium who visited the pub and inn told the manageress that the ghosts were, in fact, two residents (from a time when the Abbey was central to the town) who fell in love but, because of his vow of celibacy, theirs was a forbidden love. So frustrated were they by their inability to be together, their spirits were bound to the pub where they live happily together in the afterlife.

The George & Pilgrim's Hotel

Image source: Getty; Alamy

JAMAICA INN

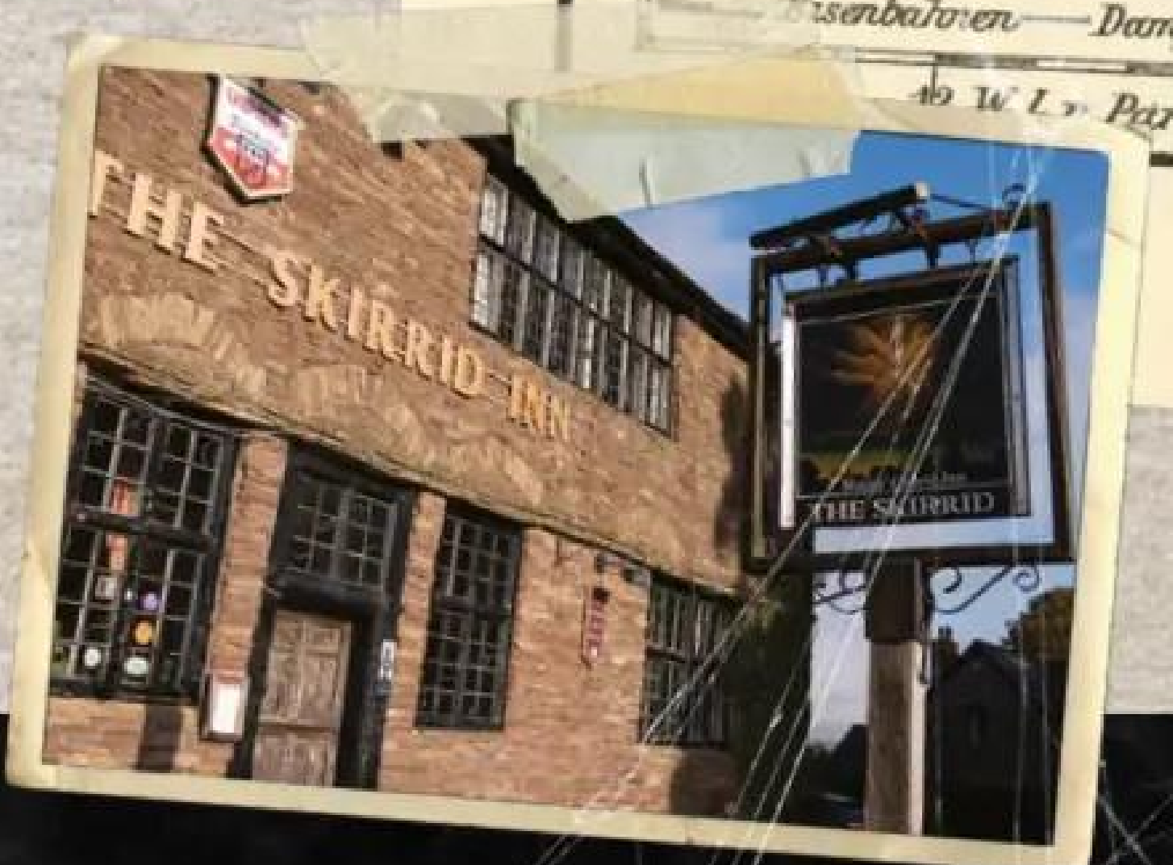
Location: Launceston, Cornwall, England

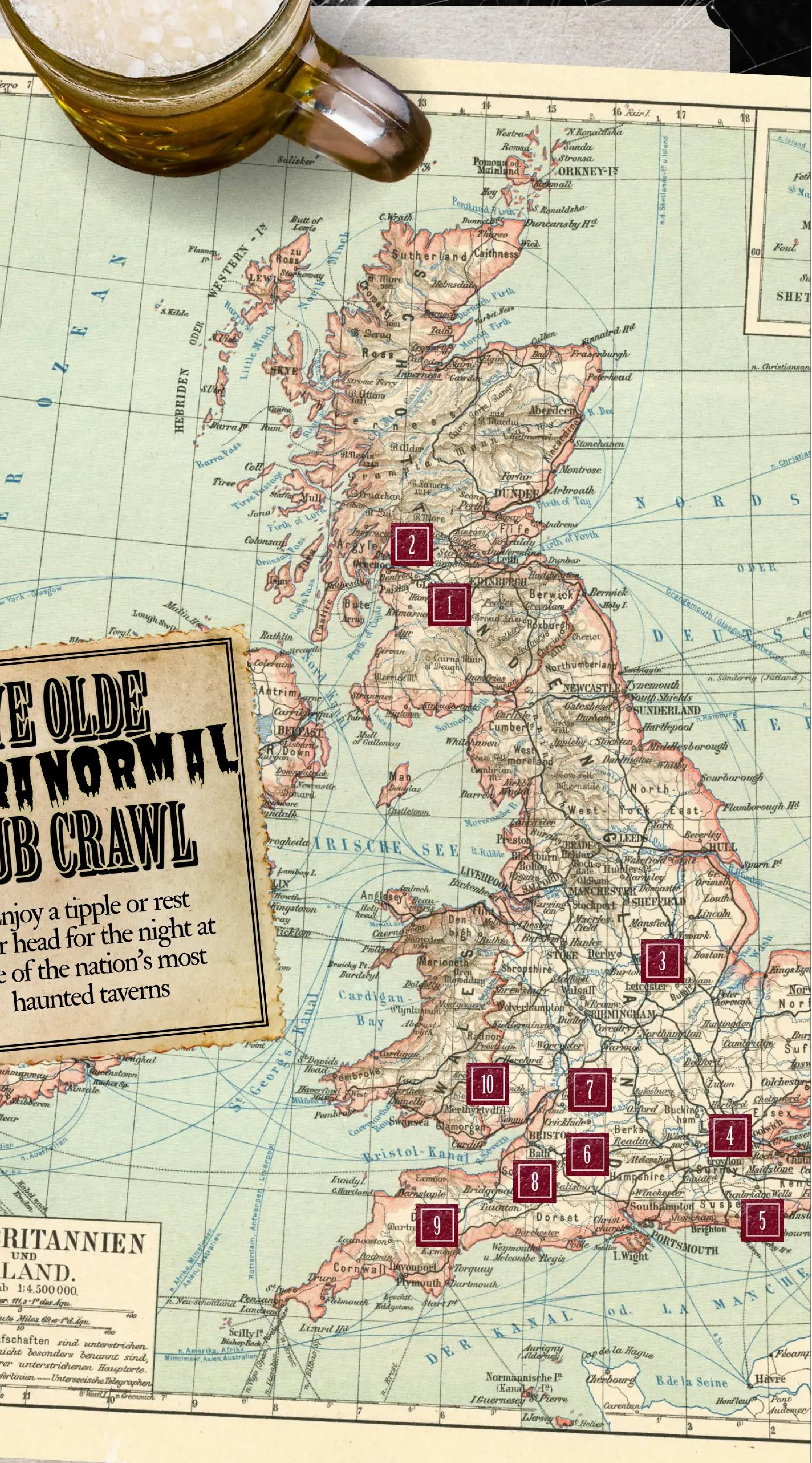
9 Ghost sightings occurred at this 18th Century coach house as early on as 1911. Visitors claimed to have spotted a young man donning a US airman's uniform coming through the kitchen door and entering the bar before vanishing. For any sceptics, one spooky occurrence was caught on camera in October 2017. It shows the receiver of the pub's wall phone being picked up and dropped into thin air, scaring the barmaid. A mysterious crying baby has been reported from inside Room 7. Meanwhile, those staying in rooms 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, have all had reports of someone knocking on the bedroom door, but when the occupants answered no one was outside.

SKIRRID INN

Location: Crucorney, Abergavenny, Wales

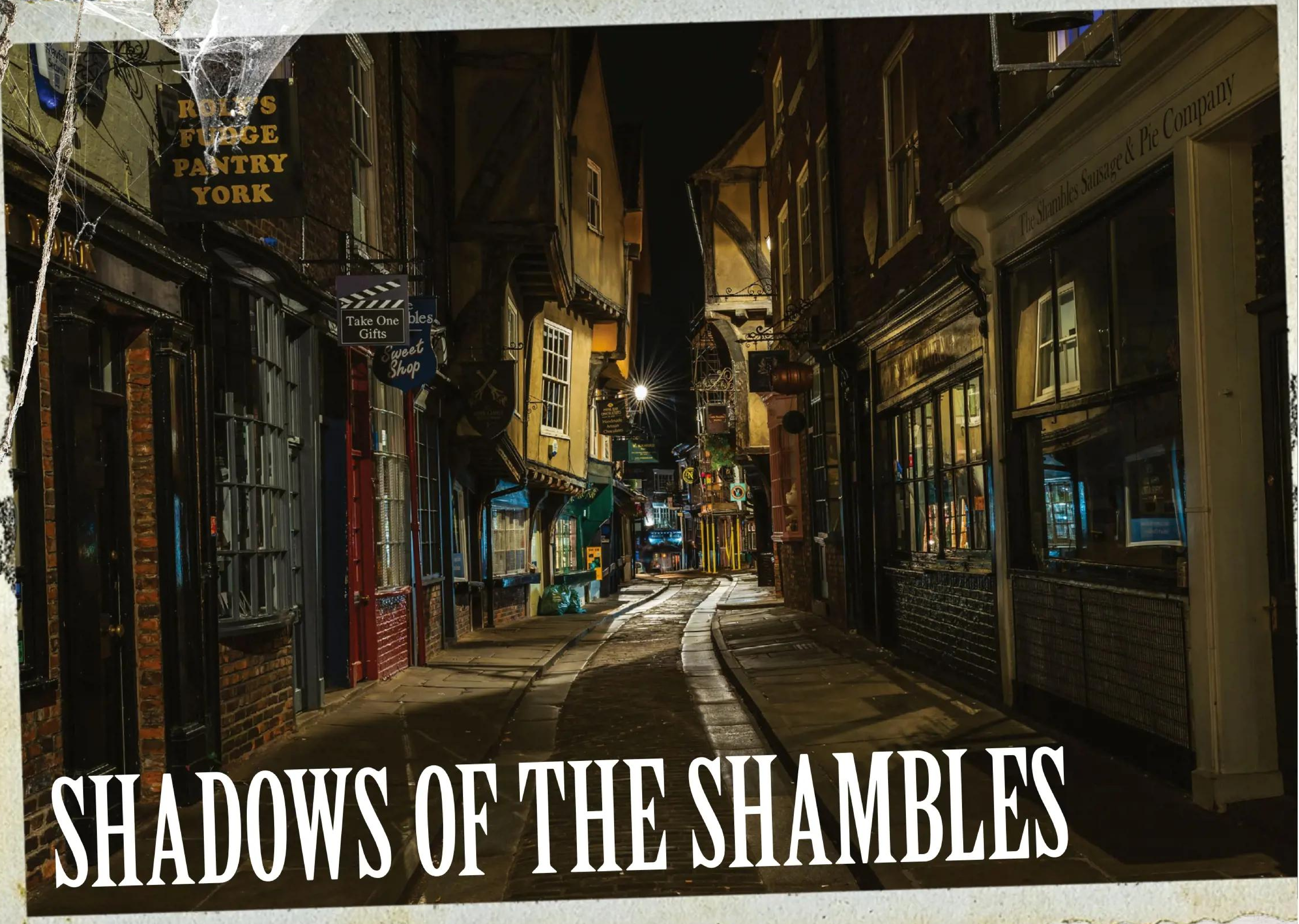
10 The oldest and possibly most haunted pub in Wales, many of those who have braved a night's stay in Skirrid Inn have reported spotting ghosts stalking the grounds. The inn was first used as a courtroom, in which over 180 were convicted of capital crimes. Their punishment was to hang by the neck until dead from the oak beam over the staircase outside the courtroom. Those condemned to walk the floors of the inn for eternity include the 17th Century 'hanging judge', George Jeffreys, while the hangman has also reportedly been seen on occasion. One felon sentenced to death, John Crowther, a sheep rustler, has been seen several times on the property.





YE OLDE PARANORMAL PUB CRAWL

Enjoy a tipple or rest your head for the night at one of the nation's most haunted taverns



SHADOWS OF THE SHAMBLES

Founded in 71AD, the city of York has been at the centre of a rich, varied and often brutal history

Location:
York, Yorkshire, England

Tips: Book yourself on one of York's legendary ghost tours, you won't be disappointed!

York was the capital of the Roman province Britannia Inferior, and a seat of military power through the ages, having been invaded by the Vikings, the Normans and decimated during the Civil war. The unrest and bloodshed within the city walls have understandably lead to York's reputation as the most haunted city in Britain.

York's haunted pubs continue to be a huge draw for spooky tourists, with the Golden Fleece being the subject of books, documentaries and TV shows on matters of the supernatural. Home to no less that 15 separate ghosts, the 16th century drinking house is a narrow and quaint building, filled with (modern) death masks, memorial skulls and spirits by the bucketload. One of the most infamous ghostly residents of the Fleece is Lady Anne Peckett, the wife of Lord Mayor John Peckett, who is frequently seen floating up and down the pub's staircase, moving things around the building, staking her claim as the lady of the house. A WWII Canadian airman is said to still haunt the upper floors after he fell, or was pushed, from a third-storey window, dying on the pavement below. Most famous of all is the spirit of a small boy who, in the 19th century, was trampled by horses pulling a brewers cart. He is still seen today across the pub's lower floors, playing and tugging at the shirts of patrons.

Across the road from the Golden Fleece is The Shambles, York's ancient shopping district with some of the best preserved medieval streets in Europe. Throughout these winding,

YORK GHOST MERCHANTS

No. 6 The Shambles

Founded by 'The Sorrowful Guild of Master Ghost Makers', York Ghost Merchants is undoubtedly the strangest shop in York. The magical little shop sells one item only: ghosts. Rather than offering spirits in bottles, the ghosts on offer are small, handmade spectres adorned with makers marks that bring a little of York's spookiness back to your home. Much like humans in life, no two ghosts are the same, and picking the right ghost for you is a tough, but exciting task. Since going viral on social media, queues for the Ghost Merchants can last for hours at a time, so make sure to arrive early to avoid disappointment.

THE YORK GHOST MERCHANTS

cobbled lanes, you pass by the most haunted house in York at 35 Stonegate. A house is said to have stood here for over 1000 years, with the modern shop containing ghosts from the breadth of the millennium. Tucked away past the hustle and bustle of little shops, ghost walks and magic-themed bars is a tiny, peaceful shrine to Margaret Clitherow. Margaret Clitherow was born in 1556 and met her grizzly end in 1586, sentenced to death for harbouring Catholic priests in her home, a capital offence at the time. She was taken to the toll booth at Ouse Bridge and 'pressed to death'. This barbaric punishment involved her own door being placed on top of her and slowly laden with huge stones that crushed her body, resulting in a long and painful death. She was canonised in 1970 and is celebrated across York today as a martyr for her beliefs.

However, York's most famous grave belongs to a highwayman, brought into legendary status through stories of fanciful and daring deeds. Dick Turpin was a highwayman and horse thief whose story was romanticised and popularised after his execution in 1739. The Victorians loved tales of the lovable rogue, and his name can be found across many buildings and streets in York. While the church adjoining the graveyard is long gone, and all other stones laid flat or removed, the grave of Dick Turpin can be found by Lead Mill Lane on the outskirts of the city. While the headstone didn't appear until nearly two centuries after his death, his memorial is a must-see for any spooky tourist in search of a darker history.

> "THE UNREST AND BLOODSHED WITHIN THE CITY WALLS HAVE UNDERSTANDABLY LEAD TO YORK'S REPUTATION AS THE MOST HAUNTED CITY IN BRITAIN"

Golden Fleece

THE HOUSE OF TREMBLING MADNESS

42 Stonegate

While York is not short of haunted watering holes, the House of Trembling Madness offers a drinking and dining experience unlike no other. Once a Norman house in 1180 AD, this medieval drinking den offers a huge range of craft ales and absinthe as well as a unique space to chill out in the old city with cluttered walls and taxidermy that leers from the ancient exposed timbers.

Image source: Getty; Alamy; Geograph

EERIE ABODES

Ghosts aren't simply the realm of old castles, abandoned buildings and creepy forests. The scariest of all spirits are those that follow us home...

BORLEY RECTORY

Location: Essex, England

Built in 1862 to replace the original rectory that had burned down in 1841, Borley Rectory initially appeared to be a bog-standard red-brick Victorian house in the Gothic style favoured at the time. The first residents were the Reverend Henry Dawson Ellis Bull and his family, which included 14 children. Although there were no known reports of paranormal occurrences before the building of the new house, shortly after the family had moved in rumours began to fly around the village of unexplained noises and activity in the building, while four of the rector's young daughters reported seeing a spectral nun in the grounds. Upon discovering that there had once been a monastery on the site, the children concocted a lurid tale involving the nun being walled up alive after falling in love with one of the monks. This was clearly untrue, but nonetheless over the years there were alleged sightings of the nun as well as a carriage driven by two headless coachmen.

When Reverend Bull died in 1927, the rectory became home to his successor, Reverend Smith, and his family, who also reported strange, possibly supernatural occurrences around the house. More alarmingly, Mrs Smith discovered the skull of a young woman while clearing out a cupboard. It was the Smiths who took the step of contacting the Society for Psychical Research, as well as the famous paranormal investigator Harry Price, who visited for the first time in June 1929. He reported such supernatural phenomenon as spirit messages, stone throwing and objects moving – which the Smiths believed he did himself because they stopped as soon as he left. Price would return to Borley in 1937 after the departure of the Smiths' successors, the Foysters, who reported serious poltergeist activity as well as being physically attacked by an unseen presence in the house. Price rented the house for a year and recruited ghost hunters to spend time there and record paranormal activity, during which time they claimed to have made contact with a murdered nun called Marie and also a more vengeful spirit calling itself Sunex Amures, who threatened to set fire to the rectory on 27 March 1938. However, it was not until the following year, on 27 February, that the infamous Borley Rectory went up in flames after its new owner accidentally knocked over an oil lamp. Although many of the stories about the rectory are now known to have been fake, modern-day ghost hunters still claim to see spectral lights and hear strange noises at the site where it once stood.

HAMPTON COURT PALACE

Location: Hampton Court Palace, Richmond upon Thames, England

King Henry VIII spent a great deal of time at Hampton Court Palace, especially during the second part of his reign, even going as far as to expand and alter areas to suit his tastes. However, it isn't just his architectural legacy that survives at Hampton Court – evidence of his brutality also lives on.

At least two of Henry's unlucky wives are said to still roam Hampton Court, occasionally appearing to guests and staff alike. Henry VIII's third wife, Jane Seymour, died in childbirth in 1537, and is believed to haunt the Silverstick Stairs where her pale and mournful spectre is often seen carrying a lighted candle. Henry's fifth wife, Catherine Howard, was executed for adultery in 1542 and has a rather less peaceful afterlife. She is regularly reported to be seen screaming Henry's name, trying to reach his chapel after he condemned her to death.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

BLICKLING HALL

Location: Blickling, Norfolk, England

Originally owned by Sir John Fastolf of Caister, Blickling Hall has hosted the great and good of history, including the famous, tragic, Boleyn family. It is believed that Henry VIII's doomed second wife, Anne Boleyn, was born in the hall and has since returned for centuries after her death. Legends tell of Anne's spirit returning home to Blickling Hall, driven by a carriage of headless horsemen and delivered to the hall's gates. She is said to be dressed completely in white and carrying her severed, bloody head under her arm. Anne's father, Thomas Boleyn, also met the same unfortunate end, and is also seen carrying his own head under his arm, his mouth dramatically pouring with fire, instead of blood. Other spirits, such as that of a mysterious grey lady and Sir John Fastolf, a 15th-century knight (upon whom Shakespeare based 'Falstaff') are seen floating between the rooms at Blickling.

284 GREEN STREET

Location: Enfield, London, England

There was obvious distress in Peggy Hodgson's voice when she called local police to her rented terrace home on 284 Green Street, where the single mother was raising four children.

As her kids prepared for bed that August evening in 1977, Peggy heard a strange noise upstairs. Thinking it was her daughters, 13-year-old Margaret and 11-year-old Janet, she went to look and something terrifying happened. A heavy chest began sliding across the room, apparently without assistance. When Peggy began shoving it back, she met strong resistance from an unseen force. The chest moved a second time, faster. Aghast, Peggy and the girls fled.

When police officers arrived, they found nothing unusual – until they started to leave. Years later, one of them remembered a chair in the living room rising off the floor and moving across the room. After checking for wires and other unseen reasons for the episode, the police left. However, what would become known as the Enfield Poltergeist did not. For months, the poltergeist wreaked havoc, apparently throwing objects and making noises.

As news of the phenomena leaked, sceptics accused the girls of being the source. In desperation, Peggy contacted the Society for Psychical Research. Two investigators, Guy Lyon Playfair and Maurice Grosse, responded, hiring a barrister, Mary Rose Barrington, to verify their research. During more than a year on the premises, the investigators recorded numerous incidents, including Playfair's encounter. He entered an upstairs room to find the entire Victorian-era fireplace ripped from the wall – hardly something the young girls were capable of.

Witnesses saw Janet levitate, and she was dragged by an unknown entity from her bedroom and down the stairs. She also broke into disturbing fits of cursing, and an eerie voice was heard coming from her. When investigators posed questions, the voice replied that it belonged to a man named Bill. A record search revealed that a man named Bill Wilkins had lived and died in the house.

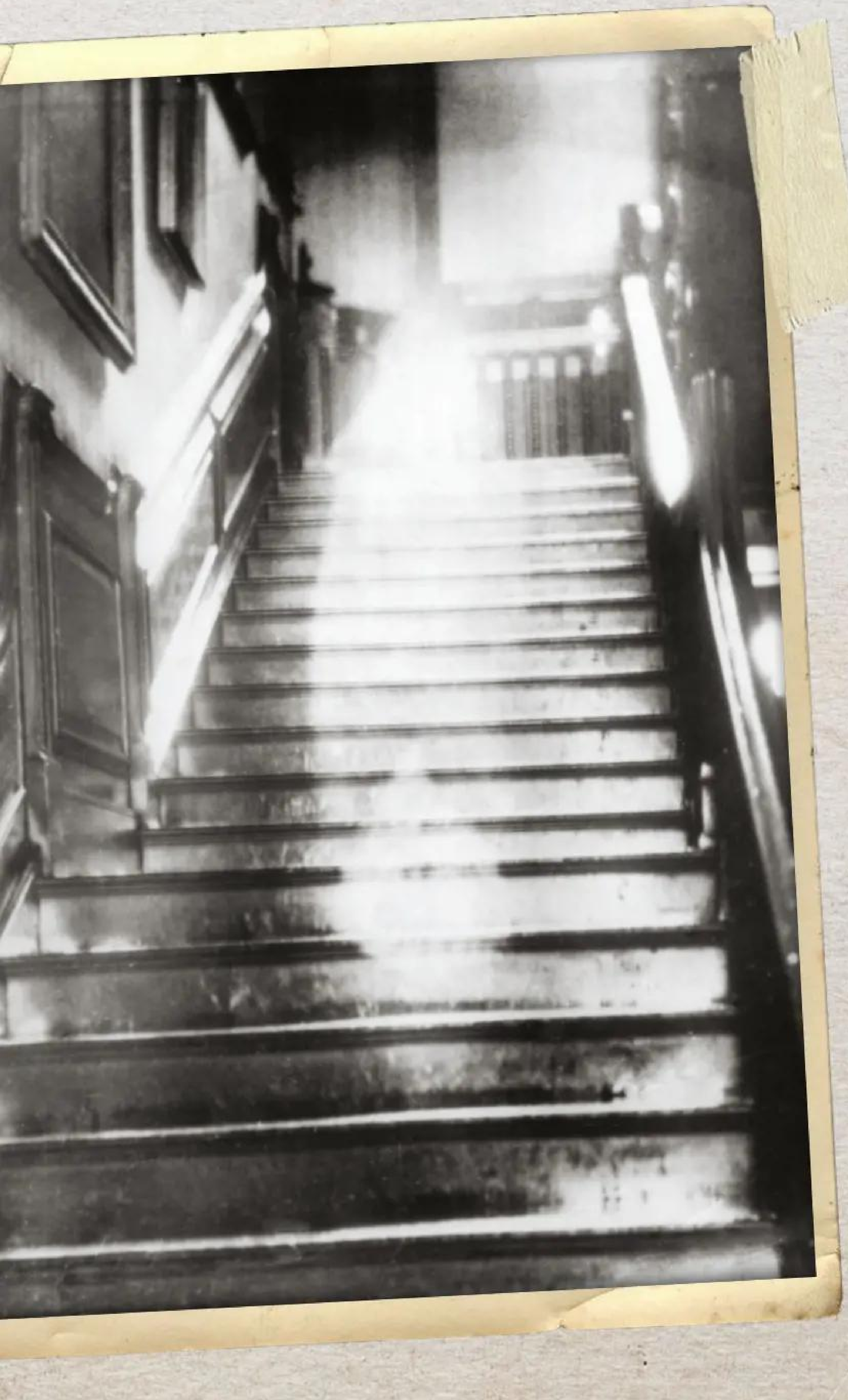
Throughout the investigation, the girls were suspected of playing tricks, but they claimed that very few of the occurrences were their doing. Thirty years after the events subsided, Janet told an interviewer, "I know from my own experience that it was real. It lived off me, off my energy." Although the sceptics persist, the poltergeist activity in Enfield remains largely unexplained. Today, Enfield is still a residential home, so please do not disturb the current residents.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

WOODCHESTER MANSION

Location: Nympsfield, Gloucestershire, England

Woodchester is a rare beast in the field of haunted grand mansions, in that it was never actually inhabited. For reasons still unknown, the grand Gothic mansion was abandoned while half-built in the 19th century, leaving an intact exterior and strangely empty interior trapped in time. Despite this, Woodchester's ghosts are plentiful in number, including a strange floating head, a horseman, young children, a stonemason and a handful of spirits from the 1940s. It is these wartime spirits that appear to be the most sociable within the mansion's walls, as 1940s music and chatter is often heard throughout the building, while strange lights are said to appear and small stones fall from the air with no cause. The chapel is thought to be similarly busy, with the smell of freshly-extinguished candles frequently reported, while the figure of a man, staring upwards at the stained glass windows, often accompanies them.



RAYNHAM HALL

Location: Fakenham, Norfolk, England

Although some have claimed that the famous photograph of a ghostly entity floating down the stairs of Raynham Hall is nothing more than a cunning fake, many more, including the renowned ghost hunter Harry Price, believe it to be the genuine article. Over the years the image has been reproduced in hundreds of books on the paranormal, but who is this luminary spectre and what is her story?

It is thought that the Brown Lady, so-called because of her chocolate-coloured brocade dress, is in fact the ghost of Lady Dorothy Walpole, the beautiful fun-loving second wife of Charles 'Turnip' Townshend. Despite having 11 children, it was an unhappy marriage, with Dorothy spending too much money on frocks and Charles unleashing his violent temper on a whim. When he discovered that his wife had had an affair with Lord Wharton before their marriage, Townshend locked his wife away.

Her death remains somewhat of a mystery. While she officially died of smallpox, many claimed at the time that she had been pushed down the stairs. Others whispered that she had been starved to death. In truth, she most likely died of a broken heart, longing for the children from whom she had been forcibly separated.

Either way, shortly after her death her ghost was spotted drifting along the landing and down the great staircase by servants and visitors alike. Others claimed to have seen her standing beneath her portrait in one of the bedrooms. It seemed that, contrary to her gentle nature in life, in death Dorothy's spirit was cruel and malevolent, resulting in the rapid departure of many members of staff. No more the beautiful mistress of the house, this hideous entity stared out blankly with dark hollow sockets rather than her previous sparkling eyes.

Various famous guests, including King George IV, who refused to stay in "this accursed house" ever again, and well-known author Captain Marryat, who fired a gun point-blank into her ghostly face, had terrifying encounters with her, but it wasn't until she was photographed by Captain Provand and Indra Shira that she became a true supernatural celebrity.

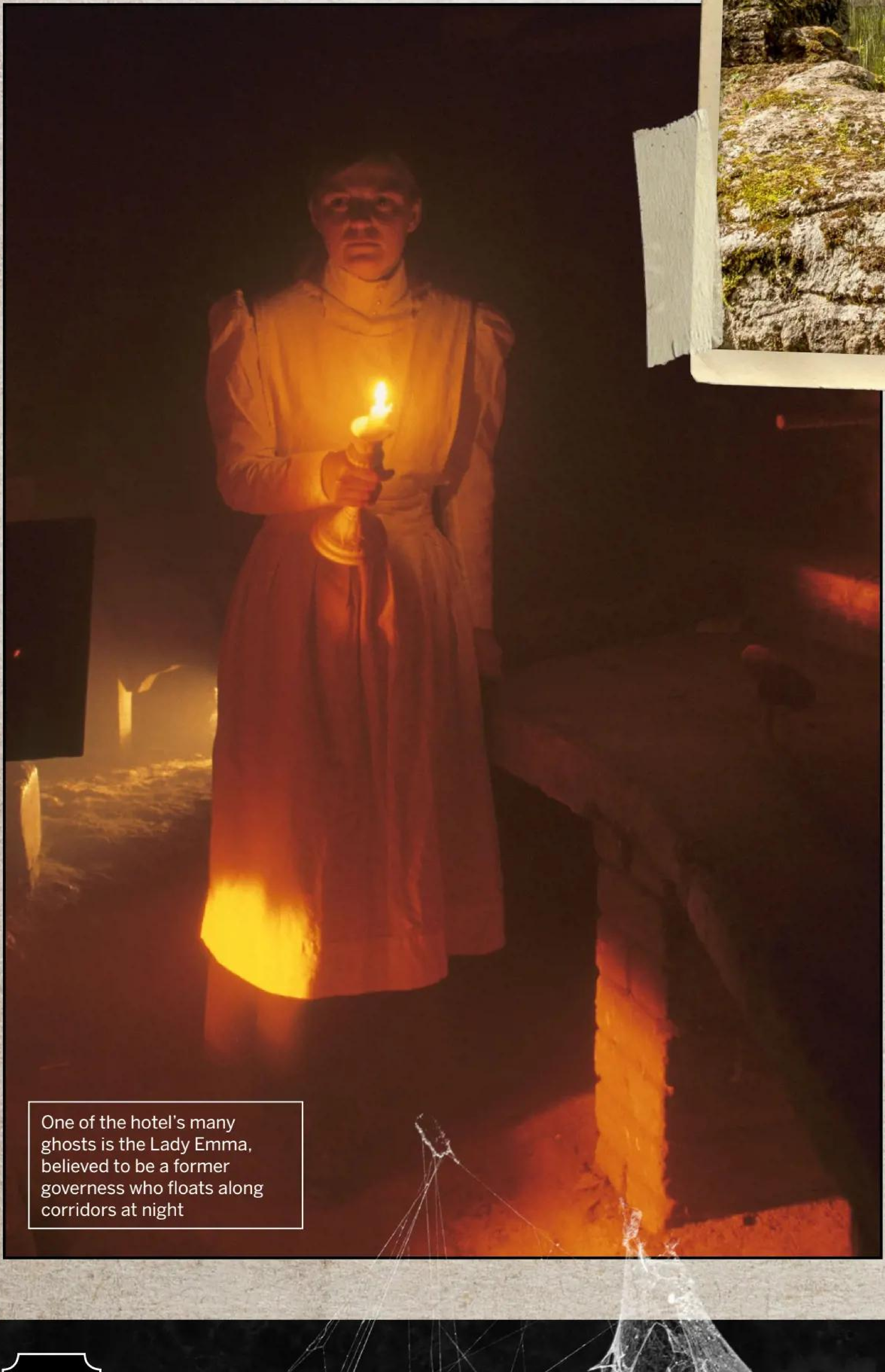
Today, Raynham Hall continues to be troubled by her restless spirit maniacally searching for her children. The sound of whispers in the picture gallery and the rustling of silk skirts on the main staircase still startle guests, while weighty chairs are known to move by themselves.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

LYDNEY PARK ESTATE

Location: Lydney, The Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, England

Nestled within the Forest of Dean, Lydney Park is a hidden gem from the 17th century, with a sprawling estate, grand house and Roman ruins to its name. It was a site that also provided endless inspiration to *Lord of the Rings* author, JRR Tolkien. Aside from the estate's idyllic landscape, Tolkien's experience in archaeological digs provided templates for the Shire and ancient evils, with the author himself taking part in a dig at 'Dwarf's Hill'. During one of these archaeological digs on site, a curse tablet – the first of its kind found in England – was unearthed, one that provided inspiration for some of Tolkien's fantastical horrors and the 'one ring'. The curse tablet was Roman in age and written in Latin, and invoked the god Nodens ('Lord of the Mines'), asking him to deny health to Senicianus, a man who stole a ring.



One of the hotel's many ghosts is the Lady Emma, believed to be a former governess who floats along corridors at night

ETTINGTON PARK HOTEL

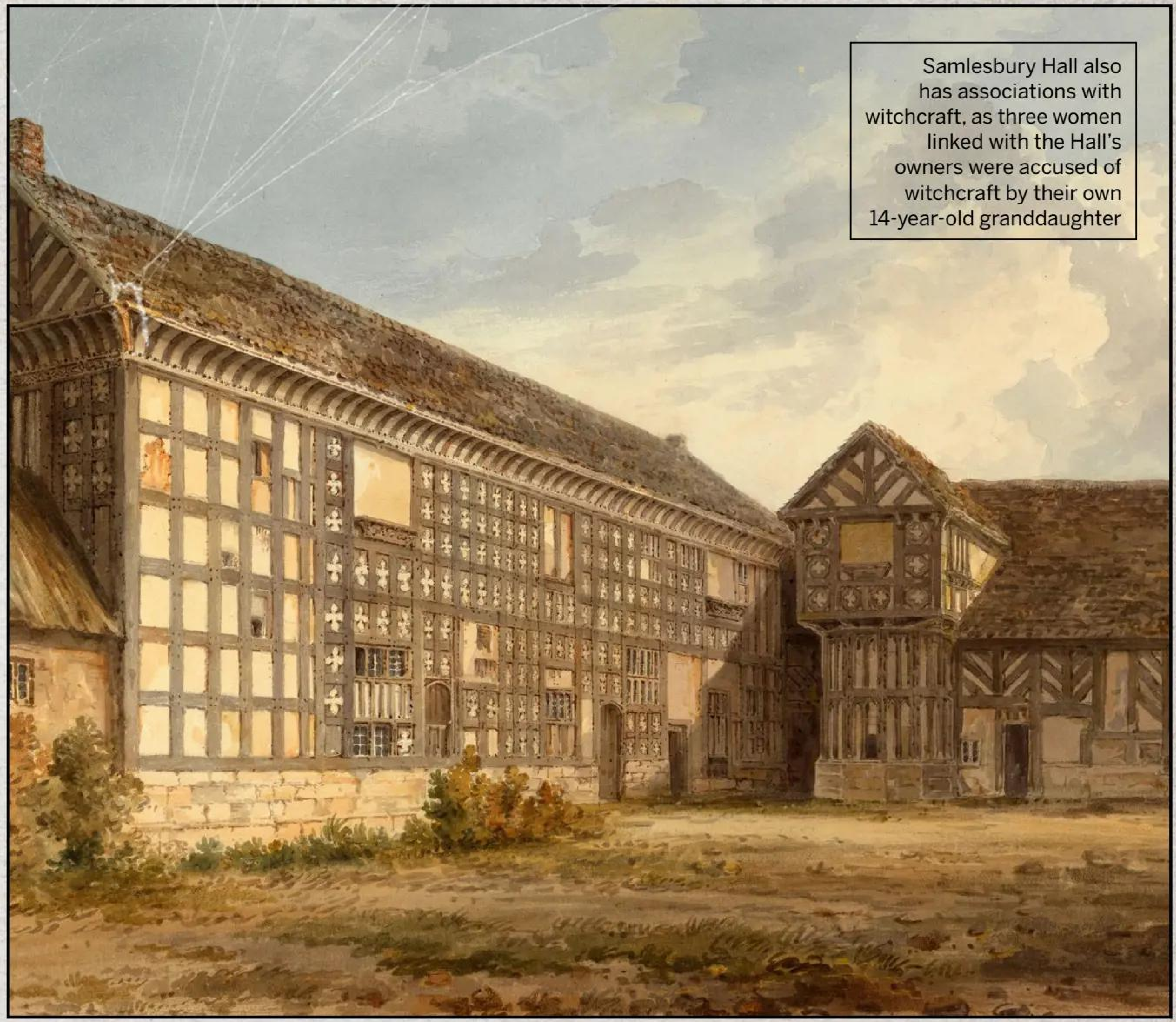
Location: Stratford-upon-Avon, England

The Ettington Park Hotel stands on a site rich in history. Initially used as the site of a Roman villa, the aristocratic Shirley family owned the land since the time of the Domesday Book. The Shirleys constructed the present neo-Gothic house in the mid-19th century, now used as the luxurious Ettington Park Hotel. However, the AA not only awarded it a 4-star rating but dubbed it "Britain's most haunted hotel". Guests have reported seeing a prim Victorian lady strolling past the conservatory entrance. In the library, the ghost of a man pets his spirit dog. Former night manager Michael Kenny had even more to report: over his five-year nocturnal stewardship of the hotel, he witnessed candles floating all by themselves and the spectre of a servant girl, who is said to have died falling down the hotel's grand staircase. Weirdest of all the paranormal goings-on is a toad found buried alive in the walls in 1859. Workmen deduced that it could only have got there during the last spell of building work in 1740, which would have made the toad 119 years old. How did the little amphibian live so long without light, oxygen, food, or water? If only the walls could talk…

SAMLESBURY HALL

Location: Preston, Lancashire, England

Thirteen ghosts are said to reside at Samlesbury Hall, yet the most famous of these is 'The Lady in White', Lady Dorothea Southworth. Dorothea's first love would be her downfall, when she – a Catholic – fell for man from the de Houghton family – Protestants. Despite their religious differences, they conducted their love affair in secret and planned to elope. Sadly, Dorothea's family caught wind of the plan and her brother laid in wait one night, before ambushing the couple and killing both the young man and two of his friends. Inconsolable, Dorothea was sent to an overseas convent, never to return. In death, her spirit is seen wandering the Hall, mourning her lost love. Another ghost is that of a beheaded priest from the 16th century, who was executed within the Hall. The bloodstain was said to be immovable, and even reappears to this day.



Samlesbury Hall also has associations with witchcraft, as three women linked with the Hall's owners were accused of witchcraft by their own 14-year-old granddaughter

ORDSALL HALL

Location: Salford, Manchester, England

Famed for another 'White Lady', Ordsall Hall's spirits are closely associated with the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, with strong links to Queen Elizabeth I and Guy Fawkes. There are several theories as to the identity of the 'White Lady', each more elaborate than the last. One theory is that she is the spirit of Margaret Radclyffe, one of the women chosen to be Elizabeth I's maid of honour. After hearing of her brother's death in battle in 1599, she died of a broken heart and spends eternity at Ordsall Hall, awaiting his return. She is frequently seen walking around, holding a candle. Building on a popular tale from Victorian novelist, W Ainsworth, some people suggest that she could also be Viviana Radclyffe, a young woman who caught the eye of Gunpowder Plot leader Robert Catesby, who was devising the act at the Hall.

SPIRITED SURVEYS

A survey conducted in 2023 reported that one in five Brits believed their home was haunted, with nearly 70% of participants admitting to believing that ghosts were real. However, contrary to many reports from haunted locations, most people surveyed believed that ghosts were generally harmless.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

BURTON AGNES HALL

Location: Burton Agnes, Driffield, Yorkshire, England

Burton Agnes Hall's ghost loved the building so much in life that she refused to leave it in death. The daughter of Sir Henry Griffith – the Hall's builder – is believed to haunt the Queen's State Bedroom, admiring the house across the centuries. Katherine 'Anne' Griffith was so excited at the construction of the Hall that it consumed her every waking moment. Hoping to get a better view, she travelled to the nearby St John's Well, but was robbed by violent thieves who left her in such a state that she died a few days afterwards. In her final hours, Katherine told her sisters that she would never rest until part of her was at rest inside the Hall, making them promise to sever her head and place it within the building. While they buried her in the local church intact, the appearance of her ghost soon changed their minds and she was promptly disinterred, with her skull being placed inside the Hall's walls.

Many attempts were made to rid the Hall of Griffith's skull, but this seemed to infuriate her ghost, who became angry, noisy and chaotic

The site at Llancaiach Fawr has been occupied for nearly 4,000 years, with its current dwelling presented as it was in the 17th century

LLANCAIACH FAWR MANOR

Location: Trelewis, Nelson, Treharris, Wales

Regarded as one of Wales' most haunted houses, Llancaiach Fawr is a fortress for spectres. Dating back to 1530, Llancaiach Fawr Manor boasts several ancient ghosts, including a Victorian housekeeper, 'Mattie', who died in a fire and continues to roam the house in eternal employment. Another common ghost is that of a young boy who tragically died from a first-floor fall at the turn of the century. His footsteps are regularly heard and guests of the Manor occasionally see a small boy, or feel his hand in theirs, as though asking to be taken home. Llancaiach Fawr was also home to Colonel Edward Prichard throughout the civil war, a man who supported the doomed Royalist cause until switching his allegiance towards the end of the conflict. His spirit is sometimes seen dressed in an elaborate outfit, appearing troubled and deep in thought at the state of the Royalist cause.

SKAILL HOUSE

Location: Skaill, Orkney Islands, Scotland

A remote and hardy building, Skaill House has its fair share of unexpected and gruesome roots. Shortly after inheriting the house and 3,500 acre estate in 1991, Major Malcolm Macrae – the 12th Earl of Breckness – began renovations and stumbled across several sets of human remains beneath the floorboards. What could have been a murder enquiry was revealed to be an early Pictish, or Iron Age, burial ground. While some believe these ancient Celtic ghosts wander the house, most Skaill spirits are rather more modern. 'Ubby', a local man who attempted to build his own island by making a pile of rocks in the loch, is believed to haunt the house, scaring the major's dogs and walking with loud, purposeful footsteps. Other spirits with lesser identities are also believed to haunt the house, making their presence known by appearing as guests, opening doors, making sounds and even producing the smell of cigarette smoke.

A tall man has also been seen throughout the house, with some visitors even speaking to the ghost, believing him to be staff

GRAND DESIGNS

Not all haunted houses are grand manors or halls with ancient history. The scariest of all are modern, unassuming houses that mimic our own, reminding us of the terrifying reality that each of us could be unwittingly sharing our home with a gathering of undead visitors.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

GHOSTS, GHOULS AND THE GOTHIC

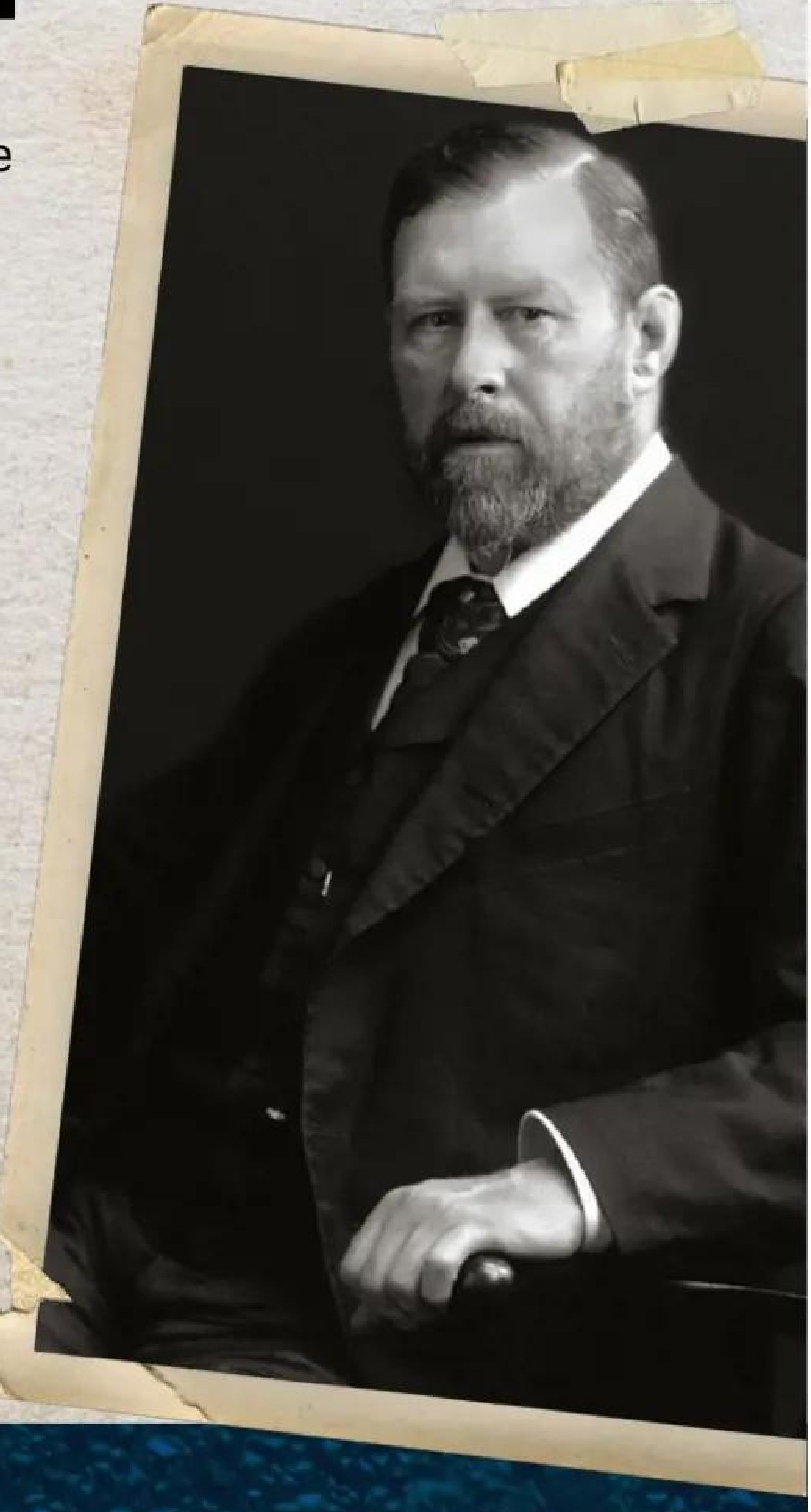
Whitby may seem like an unassuming, seaside town to outsiders, but beneath its picture-postcard façade, lies a world of ghostly and gothic treasures

Location:
Whitby,
North Yorkshire,
England

Tips: Visit in October for Whitby Goth Weekend and the Bizarre Bazaar

Whitby was not only beloved by gloomy Victorians, but hosts the UK's longest-running goth festival and was the backdrop to Dracula's formative adventures. In 1890, a little known writer called Bram Stoker visited Whitby to recover from a gruelling theatre tour of Scotland. What he found in Whitby would catapult him into a household name for decades to come. Against the backdrop of Whitby's ancient abbey, clifftop graveyard and dramatic vistas, he would craft the story of Count Dracula. Shadows of the vampiric nobleman can be found throughout the town. The Royal Hotel that hosted Bram Stoker is still in business today, and sits opposite a bench dedicated to the view that inspired the creation of Dracula. Passing through the town's famous Whale Bone Arch (erected in 1853 to commemorate the town's historic whaling trade) the view of St Mary's church and Tate Hill sands come into view across the bay. In Stoker's *Dracula*, the ship Demeter runs around at Tate Hill Sands. The bloodthirsty count had been travelling in the belly of the ship, and emerged as an enormous black dog which raced up the Abbey's 199 steps and across to St Mary's Churchyard. However, Dracula is not the only spectral dog in Whitby's past! The Barguest Hound is an enormous ghostly dog with glowing red eyes who roams the streets of Whitby, producing a howl that can only be heard by those about to die.

It's little wonder that St Mary's inspired Stoker as the clifftop church has some of the most dramatic



and spooky views in the whole country. Founded in 1110, the church is a treasure trove of historical treats, including rare 18th century box pews marked with the phrase 'for strangers only'. The churchyard is a popular tourist draw, filled with fascinating headstones telling tales of tragedies at sea and decorated with a wide range of dramatic funerary art. However, most terrifying of all, St Mary's has suffered from land slips in recent years that not only damaged the churchyard, but have caused human remains to drop onto the street below.

Whitby Abbey has been an imposing silhouette on Whitby's east cliff for over 1500 years and continues to welcome visitors from around the world every day. Not only is it a gothic icon, but has so much history within its grounds. From medieval coffins to royal burials and archaeological artefacts reaching as far back as the Bronze Age, the ruins of the Abbey are a must for any traveller. Whitby Abbey is also said to be home to the ghosts of several former nuns and monks, including the Abbey's founder, St Hilda. She has been spotted looking out from the Abbey's highest windows. In darker stories, she is joined by the ghost of Constance de Beverly, a nun who broke her vows of chastity. As a punishment, she was bricked up alive within the Abbey's walls. Her cries and desperate pleas for mercy can still be heard echoing across the ruins to this day… or rather, night.

> "Against the backdrop of the ancient abbey, clifftop graveyard and dramatic vistas, Bram Stoker would craft the story of Count Dracula"

A SOMBRE SOUVENIR

W Hammond, 112 Church St

When Queen Victoria's husband died in 1861, she entered a period of mourning that would last the rest of her life, 40 years later in 1901. During this time, she dressed exclusively in black, her accessories encrusted with Whitby jet. This fossilised wood quickly became the gemstone of choice for the grieving woman-about-town and has long been a symbol of death and memorialisation. Today, there are many Whitby jet shops across Whitby, but the finest of these is W Hammond, which was established in 1860 and can be found by the 199 steps. Not only do they produce a variety of beautiful jewellery, but provide a restaurant, café, workshop and entire museum dedicated to the rare and unique gemstone!

HANDS OF GLORY

Whitby Museum, Pannett Park

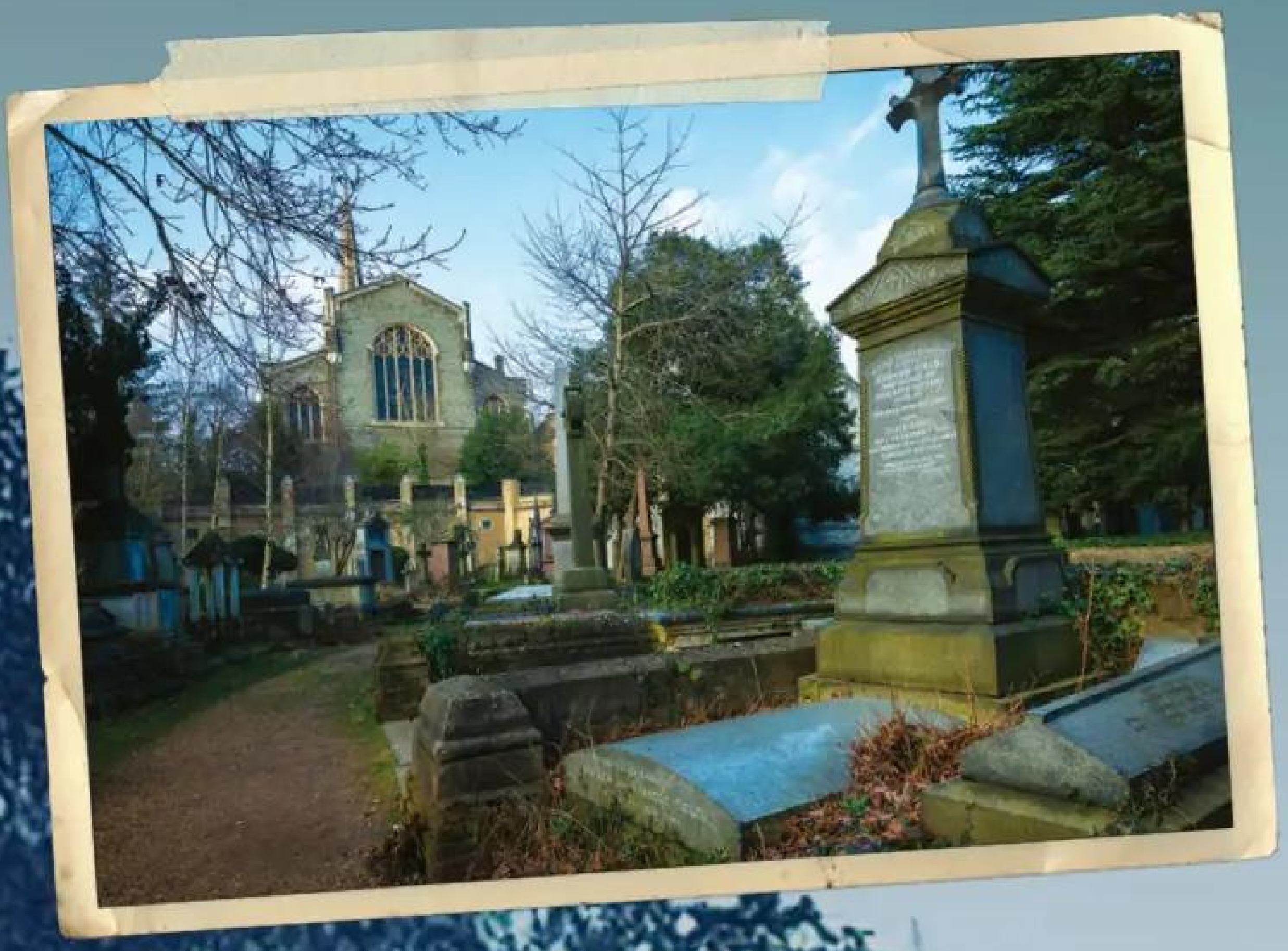
The Hand of Glory is a dried and pickled severed hand which was once the treasured possession of burglars. It was believed that if you pickled the hand of a hanged man (preferably a murderer), it would make for a very useful candlestick for criminals. If you placed a candle in the Hand of Glory and entered a house at night, it would plunge the whole house into a deep sleep. The thief could go about his business undisturbed. Whitby's example was found above the doorway of a nearby cottage and is one of only a handful (!) remaining in the world.

Image source: Getty; Alamy; www.badobadop.co.uk

A GUIDE TO TOMBSTONE TOURISM

Visiting graves and cemeteries has been a popular pastime for centuries, and there's no better time to keep that rich tradition alive

Fresh air, beautiful scenery, history and wildlife await you. Being a tombstone tourist is an ancient tradition, as medieval pilgrims would travel afar to visit the grave or relic of a long-dead saint. Later, the Victorians helped to bring the dead and living together through the introduction of garden cemeteries. With footpaths, spaces for rest, decorative trees and fine architecture, they enabled the public to spend time with their ancestors, enjoying the space as a public park. Cemeteries can teach us so much about our history (both the bad and the good) and are an important and irreplicable link to the past. Visiting and celebrating graves for their artistry and history keeps stories alive and sites open for generations to come.



Left: Visiting graves and cemeteries can enrich your life and bring stories of the past into the present

HOW TO BE A RESPONSIBLE TOMBSTONE TOURIST

Most cemeteries welcome visitors, but there are a few guidelines to help you have a safe and enjoyable experience.

When visiting any cemetery, your behaviour should be respectful regardless, but be especially aware of people attending graves and interment ceremonies, and different countries and religions will have varying expectations of behaviour.

- Try to plan your visit beforehand as most cemeteries will have opening hours, and will lock their gates at night. Be sure to check the cemetery's website for resources, maps and events. Many cemeteries operate cafes, shops and specialised tours, which can be a great introduction to the history of the site and also raises money for upkeep.
- Research grave styles and symbols before your trip, especially when visiting Victorian cemeteries. An epitaph may be interesting enough, but looking at design choices such as carved butterflies, columns or hands may reveal some hidden sentiments and facts about the deceased that otherwise you may miss.
- Most cemeteries encourage photography to capture the beauty of the site. However, in places of mass death and suffering, such as war and genocide memorials or concentration camps, be sensitive to where you are and what it means to others. Photography may be encouraged, but selfies may be inappropriate and distasteful.
- When visiting the grave of a celebrity you admire, it can be tempting to try and take a souvenir home – please don't! Oscar Wilde's grave was covered in so much lipstick that the stone was permanently damaged from fans' affection, whereas singer Jim Morrison's grave was badly damaged by fans chipping off pieces of his headstone. It's also tempting to clean an old grave or make a rubbing, but serious damage can be done and should be left to the experts. Bleach and abrasive cleaning agents can remove the stone's protective outer layer leaving them vulnerable to shattering and splitting open in cold temperatures. Many grave mosses are also protected species and help to protect graves for centuries to come!
- Finally, keep safe! Many sites can be hazardous, so be sure to wrap up warm, wear sensible footwear and be aware of your surroundings at all times. Tombstone tourism can be the most fun you have this side of the grave!

ARE YOU A TAPHOPHILE?

A taphophile (n. taphophilia) is someone who has an interest and enthusiasm for graves, cemeteries and funerals. Also known as a cemetery enthusiast or tombstone tourist.

Right: Church Cemetery in Nottingham, England has a huge variety of memorials

Image source: Getty; Alamy; Wikipedia Commons/ Alan Murray-Rust

SPOOKY CEMETERIES AND GHASTLY GRAVEYARDS

Cemeteries are eerie gardens populated by the dead yet they remain popular places to visit – people who love them are even called taphophiles!

GLASGOW NECROPOLIS

Location: Glasgow, Scotland

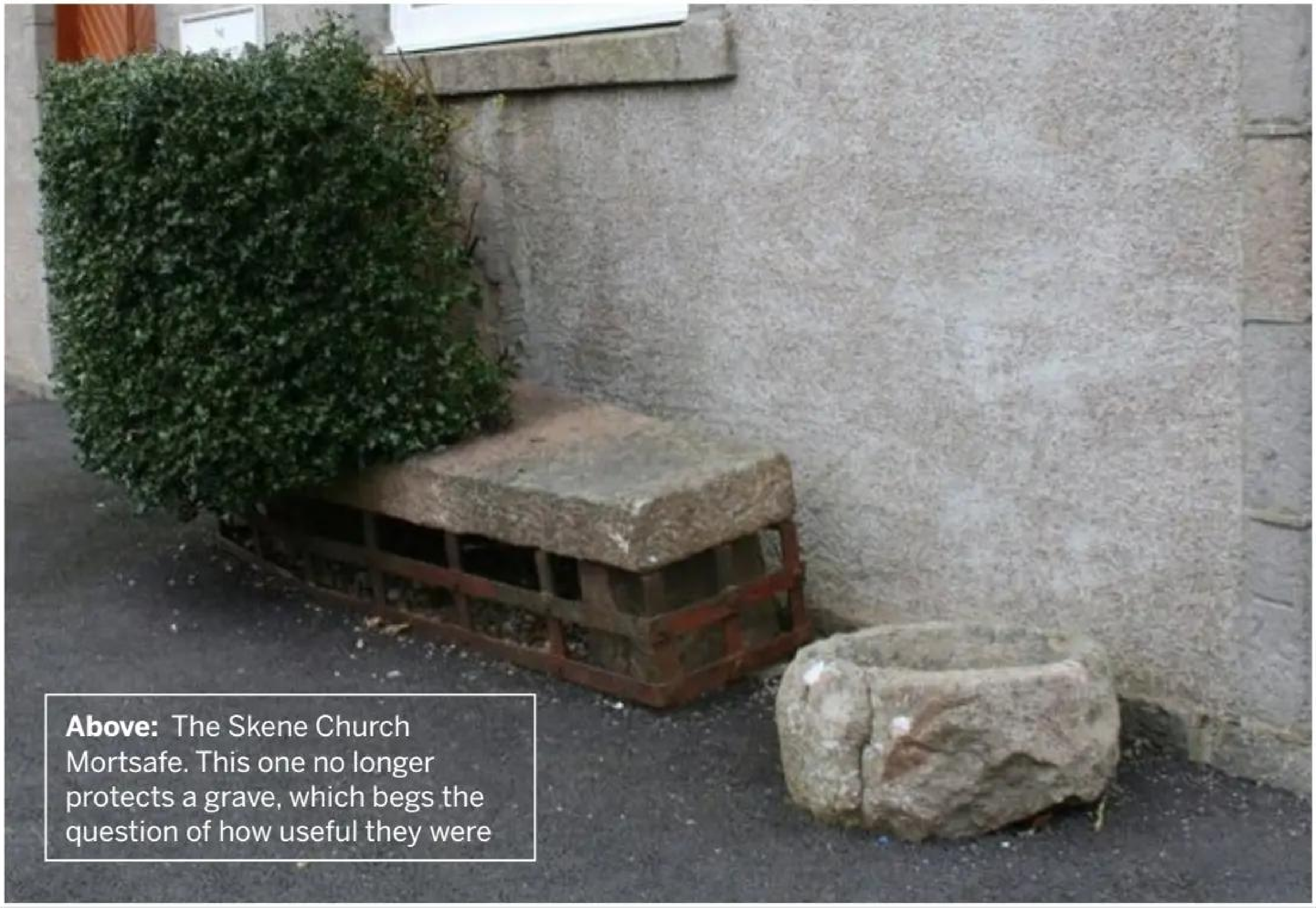
Opened in 1833, Glasgow Necropolis is a real 'city of the dead' that looks over one of Scotland's largest cities. Following the 1832 British Cemeteries Act, businesses were able to open large private cemeteries that were not only non-religious, but for profit, and Glasgow was one of the first cities to announce its own. Glasgow Necropolis proved so popular that by 1851, all 37 acres of the land were full. With over 50,000 interments (not all with headstones), the cemetery has been closed to new burials for decades but was always intended as a welcoming place for visitors, and attracts many visitors to this day. The paths of this Victorian cemetery snake upwards, leading to – not a grave – but a huge statue of John Knox, the founder of Scottish Presbyterianism. Knox's statue pre-dates the cemetery, having been erected in 1825, but provided a clear focal point, around which the architects could plan the layout.

The main entrance to the Necropolis is a curious old structure. Outside the cemetery walls, a small river called the Molendinar Burn can be found, which needs to be crossed to enter the cemetery. This reminded many Victorian visitors of crossing the river Styx, being the boundary between this world and the next, and was a sure sign to show due respect to its silent inhabitants. The bridge was completed in 1836 and became the main path for funeral processions, where it gained the name "the Bridge of Sighs".

KIRKTON OF SKENE CHURCHYARD

Location: Kirkton of Skene, Scotland

Skene Parish Church dates to 1801, and its churchyard features a mortsafe near the church's west door. Mortsafes belong to the bodysnatching era, from around 1740 to 1830, when families installed metal cages above graves to deter thieves. The Skene example also features a granite slab on top of the cage to make it even harder to loot the grave. Legend has it that the Wizard of Skene's grave lies in the churchyard, and if you walk around it a hundred times, the wizard will return. Sadly, the wizard, Alexander Seaton, died in the 1700s, before this church was built.



Above: The Skene Church Mortsafe. This one no longer protects a grave, which begs the question of how useful they were

Image source: Adobe Stock, Getty, Alamy

Did you know?

In Scotland, churches and churchyards are often referred to as kirks and kirkyards, respectively. It likely comes from a Scandinavian source like the Old Norse word 'kirkja', meaning "church"

GREYFRIARS KIRKYARD

Location: Edinburgh, Scotland

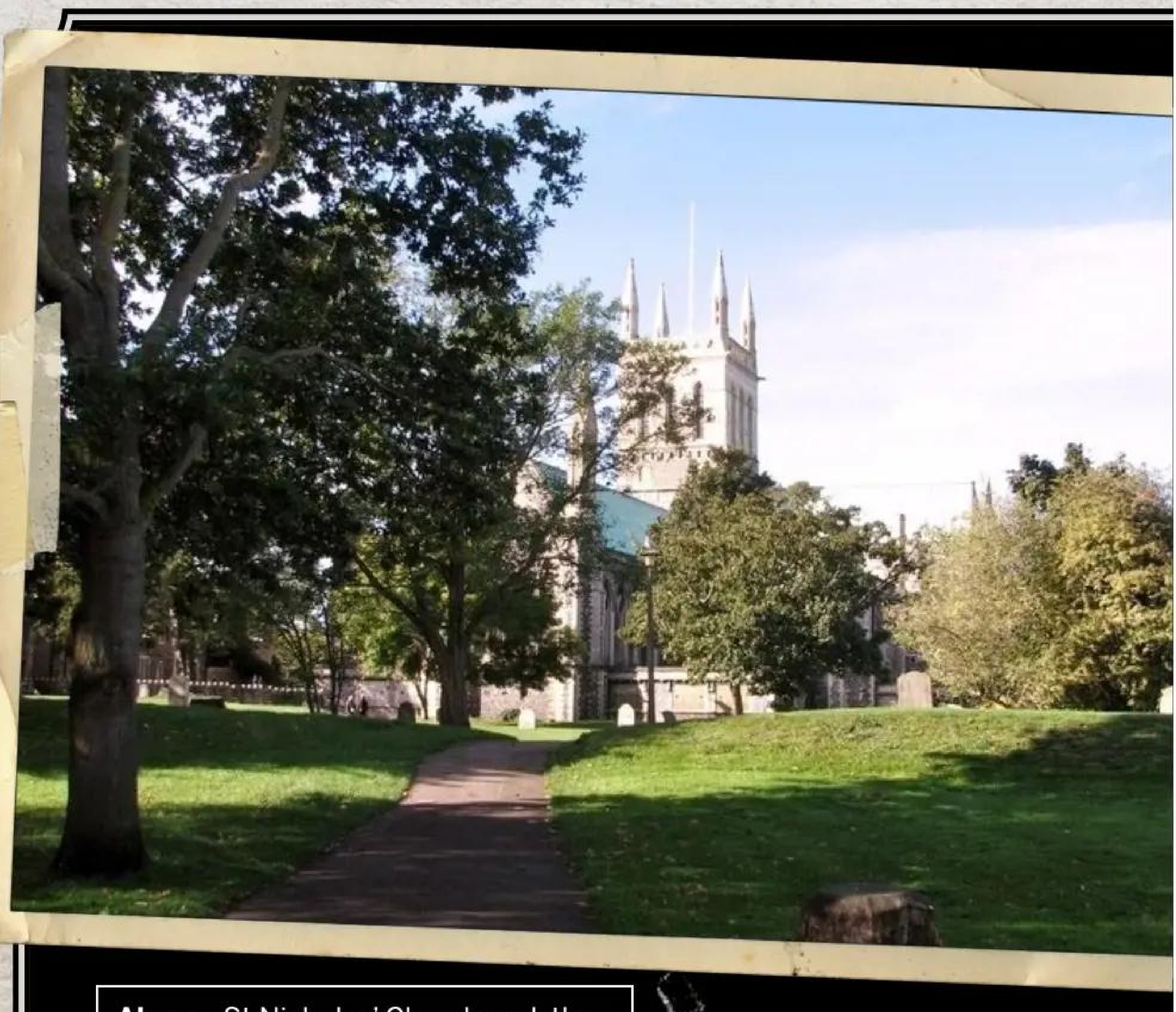
Lurking in the shadow of Edinburgh Castle, Greyfriars Kirkyard was established in the late 16th century, and is said to be one of the most haunted spots in the Scottish capital (see page 28). Many notable residents of Edinburgh were buried here over the years and with the city's dark history it isn't surprising that the residents that once walked its paths in those times would still be around watching over them today. Spend some time taking in the stunning gravestones throughout the site such as the one for surgeon John Borthwick or George Foulis. The Mausoleum of Sir George Mackenzie, Lord Advocate of Scottish Government stands out for its imposing stature and presence. Mackenzie was involved in witch trials during the 1600s as well as the persecution of Presbyterian Covenanters. Around 1,200 Covenanters were imprisoned and kept in fields near to where the Greyfriars Kirkyard stands today. Hundreds of the Covenanters died while imprisoned, leading to the Lord Advocate earning the nickname of 'Bloody' Mackenzie. It wouldn't be surprising if those who passed away under the mistreatment of the Lord Advocate would wander the graveyard today, disturbing the mausoleum of Mackenzie and ensuring he wasn't resting peacefully.

One winter's night in 1999 (some sources cite 1998 or 2000), an unhoused man broke into the Mackenzie tomb looking for shelter. Once inside, he fell through a hole in the floor into a chamber filled with bones. Soon after, rumours began to swirl of poltergeist activity near the tomb.

WOOD STREET CEMETERY

Location: Birmingham, England

Originally owned by the Wesleyan Church, Wood Street Cemetery dates to 1849 and has quite the reputation for being haunted. The head of a sculpture on one of the monuments turned by itself until someone knocked it off. Fake flowers also appear on a particular grave in a ceramic pot on their own. Residents in nearby houses have reported their doorbell cameras detecting motion, yet the feed reveals empty doorsteps when they go to check. Dogwalkers who go through the cemetery report their dogs looking at things they can't see. In other reports, a man saw spectral children dancing around a tomb, until they vanished into it, while a green figure glows by one of the graves. Despite this, people also describe the cemetery as a lovely place to walk. The West Midlands Ghost Club listed the cemetery among the Black Country's ten most haunted places in 2021.



Above: St Nicholas' Churchyard, the resting place of Elizabeth Butcher and Celia Atkins, two women accused of witchcraft in 1584

Image source: Getty; Alamy

Did you know?

Churchyards used to be laid out with graves lying east to west, so the body faces the rising sun and the Final Judgment. The tradition disappeared with the Victorian garden cemeteries, which were planned to look picturesque

ST NICHOLAS'S CHURCHYARD

Location: Great Yarmouth, England

St Nicholas' Church was founded in 1101, though its churchyard has been extended several times to accommodate more burials. According to local folklore, even those who died in the Black Death of 1348 are buried here. The churchyard even hosted an impromptu ghost hunt in 1872, when rumours spread of a ghost seen among the headstones and a thousand locals turned up to see if the stories were true. Theories varied as to who the ghost may have been, it was variously described as a shapeshifting monster, a deceased local, an escaped lunatic, or just the gravedigger at work. It seems no one got to the bottom of the haunting, despite several midnight vigils in the churchyard. In 1922, witnesses saw three ghosts clad in armour riding white horses through the churchyard, and according to legend, eight people who saw them dropped dead from fright. Who knows what you might see?

CHURCH ROCK CEMETERY

Location: Nottingham, England

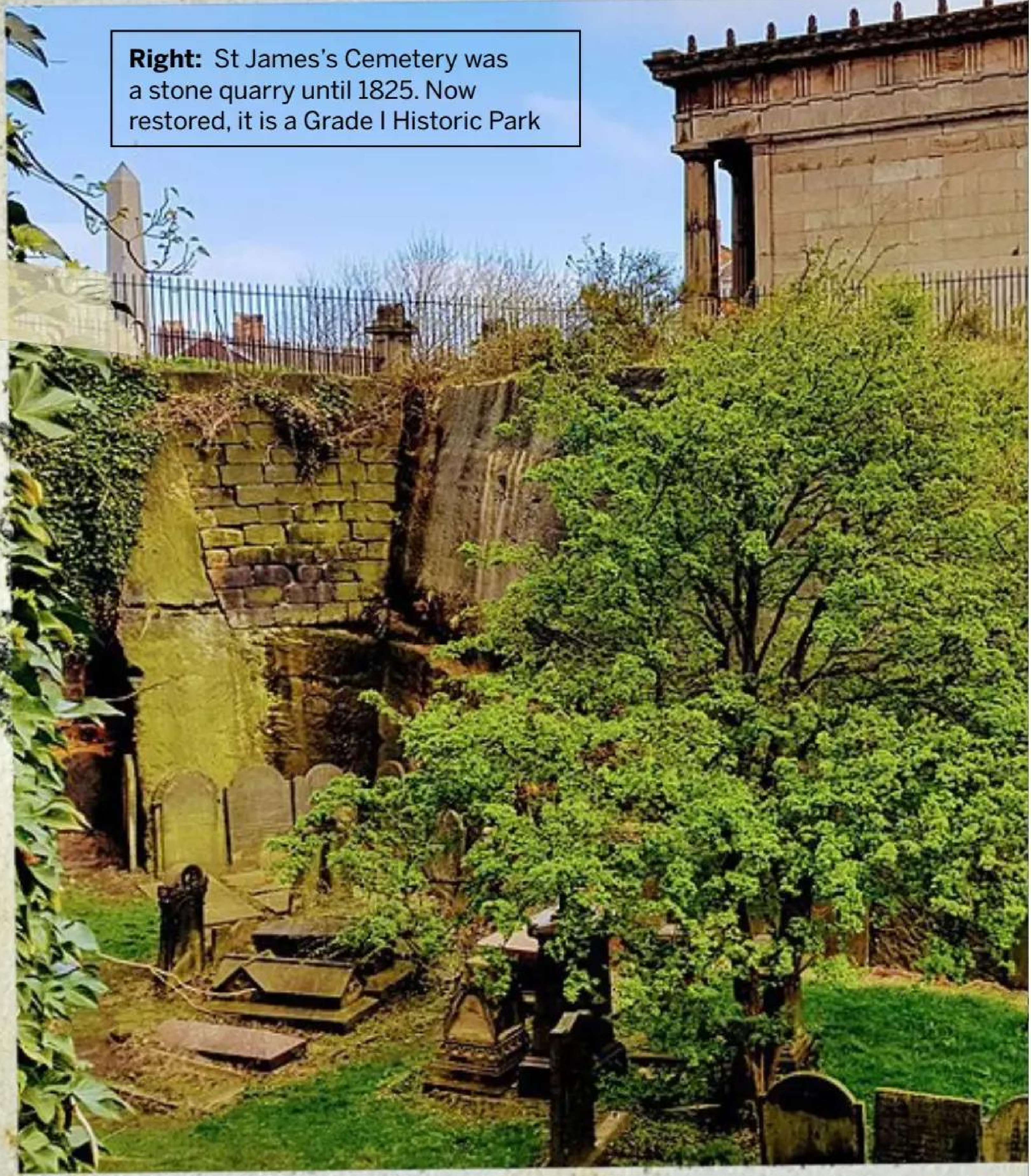
Church Cemetery, also known as Rock Cemetery, is a Grade II* listed cemetery, founded in 1848. A hollow in the middle of the cemetery known as St Anne's Valley holds pauper's graves, with up to 20 bodies interred beneath each slab. One tombstone for a boy named Joseph Fenwick lists his age as five minutes. Another child only lived for an hour. A large cave in the cemetery was reputedly used by Robin Hood to stable his horses, despite the fact the caves are manmade and too recent for this to be true. According to local legend, the site was also used for public executions before the cemetery was formally laid out. Local vicar George Oliver was also convinced a Druidic temple lay at the centre of the cemetery, although a more grounded theory suggests that area of the cemetery, filled with caves and tunnels, looks as it does thanks to earlier industrial activity.

Image source: Getty; Alamy, Wiki

ST JAMES'S CEMETERY

Location: Liverpool, England

St James's Cemetery lies below ground level behind Liverpool Cathedral. The architect commissioned to design the cemetery took inspiration from Paris' Père Lachaise Cemetery. The cemetery closed in 1936 and was restored to be opened as a park in 1972. Some claim it is the world's most haunted cemetery, with one spirit known as 'Little Grace'. Ghost hunters believed they captured audio and video evidence of the paranormal near a grave of a mother and son killed in the sinking of the SS Ellan Vannin in 1909. Shimmering white figures and a woman in black drift along the paths, with their faces sometimes emerging from the haze. A limping ghost in a top hat loiters near the tomb of William Huskisson MP. Is he the same top-hatted figure that a woman saw in the 1970s, emerging from grey smoke, once described as a vampire?



Right: St James's Cemetery was a stone quarry until 1825. Now restored, it is a Grade I Historic Park

HIGHGATE CEMETERY

Location: Camden, London, England

Located on a hill above the city, Highgate Cemetery is a Victorian love-letter to death and memorialisation. For centuries, London's burial grounds and churchyards had been bursting at the seams. Graveyards had become death-traps and the smells from some sites were unbearable and seen as a danger to public health. The ever-growing city needed a new and dignified solution to the soaring number of bodies, and so in 1839, Highgate Cemetery opened on the outskirts of London. Highgate was but one of several large cemeteries that were to open around the capital, offering large and upmarket burial spaces that were not attached to a church. Today, these cemeteries are called 'The Magnificent Seven' and are some of the most dramatic burial sites in the UK.

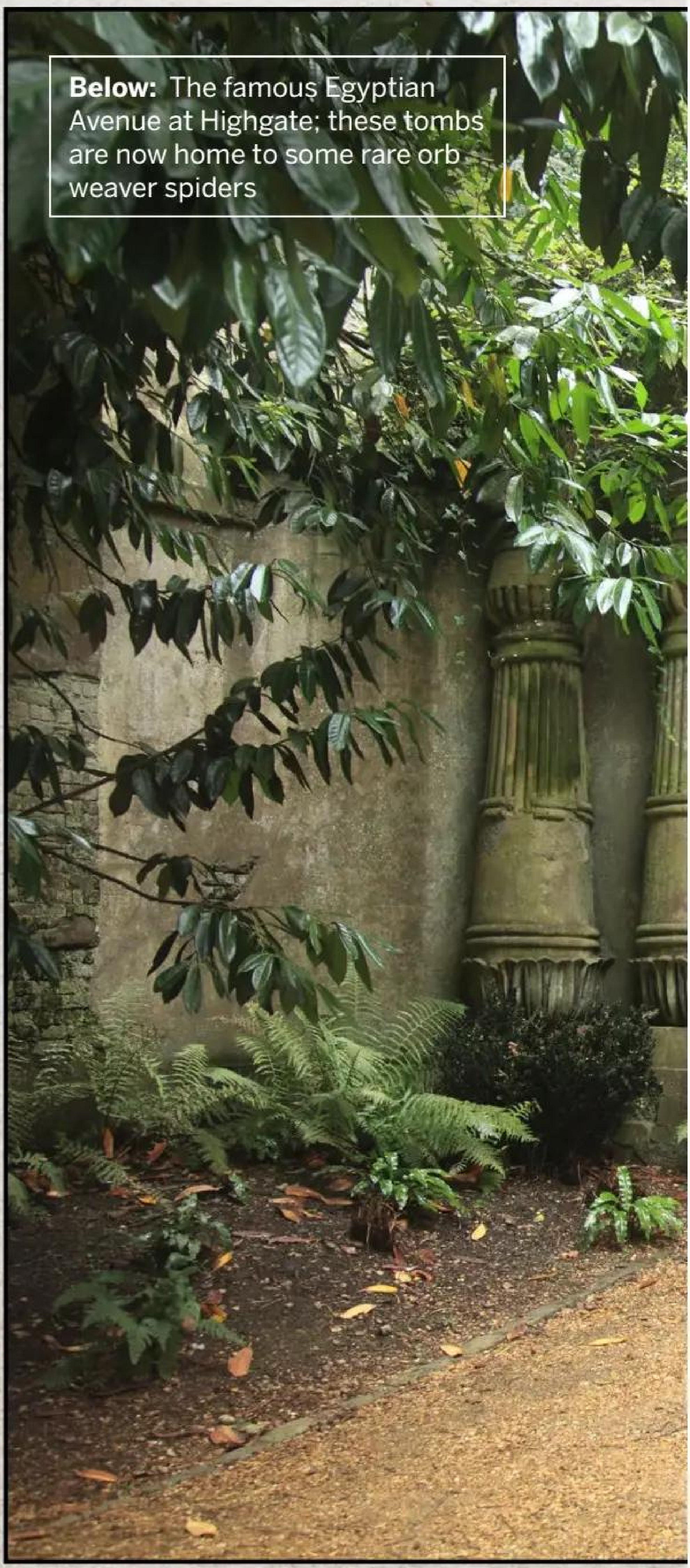
Highgate was so fashionable it expanded in 1856, adding an East cemetery, which is famous for housing the mortal remains of countless celebrities and people of note, including the poet Christina Rossetti, novelist George Eliot and, controversially, Karl Marx.

Today, Highgate is famous for being recognised as a nature reserve, as well as for the wealth of notable people buried there – but like all great cemeteries, it is also notoriously haunted. Superstitions surrounding Highgate's spooky roots exist to this day, and it's not just ghosts who roam this Victorian graveyard. During the 1970s it started to get an even more frightening reputation when dead animals sporting neck wounds who were drained of blood began appearing all over the grounds. The most popular theory to explain away the strange happenings was the Highgate Vampire. Throughout the decade, a media storm surrounded the then-overgrown cemeteries where reports of supernatural activity, grave desecration and an ancient vampire were rife.

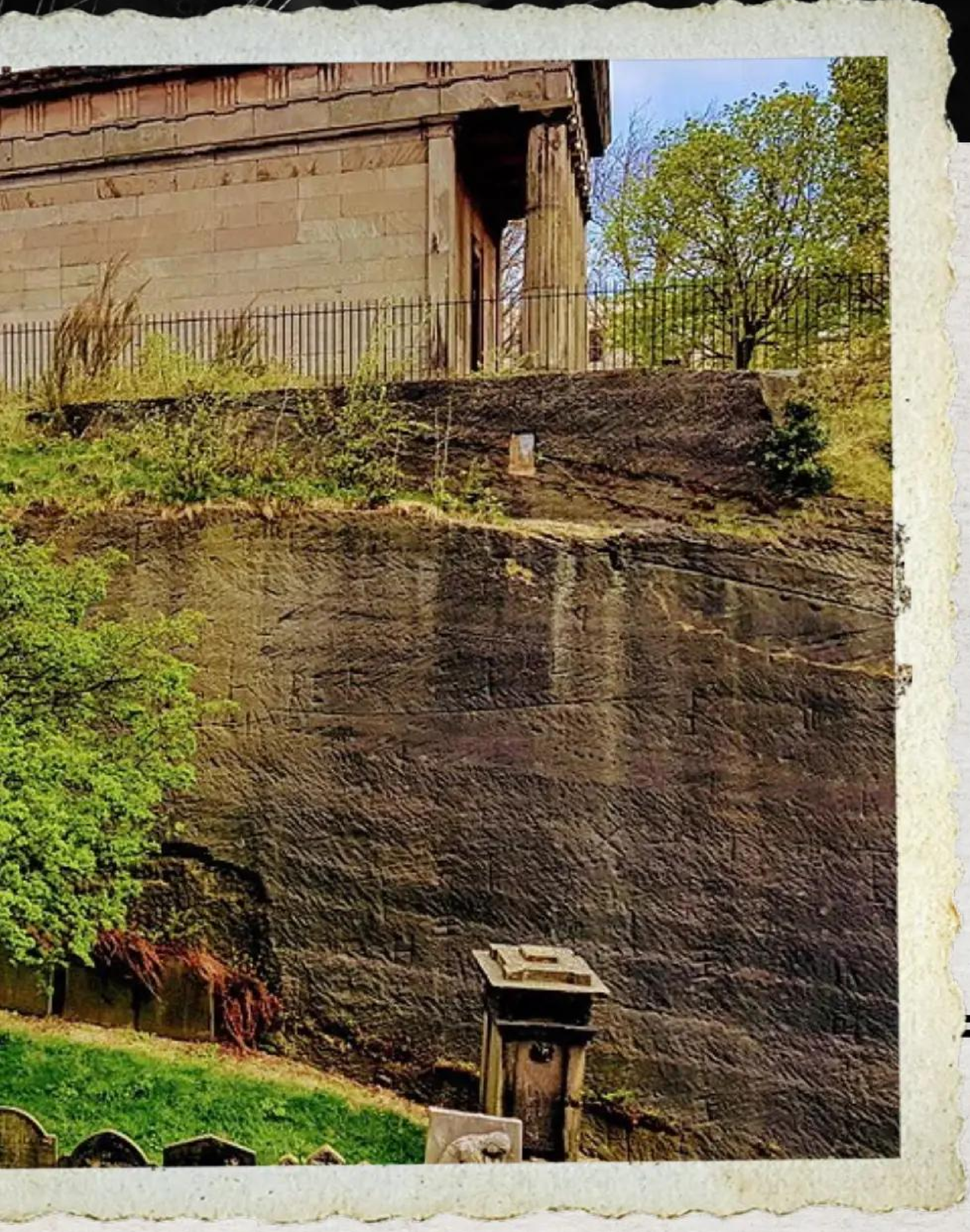
The legend started in 1969 when a group of young people, who were fascinated by the occult, roamed the grounds and one of the group, David Farrant, spent the night. He came across a grey figure, which he concluded was a supernatural force. Writing about his experience in a letter to the *Hampstead and Highgate Express* in February 1970, he asked if anyone had witnessed something similar, and several people replied.

Author and self-proclaimed vampire hunter Seán Manchester also wrote to the paper, explaining that he believed the spectral being to be a vampire, a king of the undead, a medieval nobleman who had practiced black magic in Romania, and who had been brought to England in a coffin in the 1700s, buried and then roused by modern Satanists. He believed the right thing to do was to stake the body, behead it and burn the head.

Both Farrant and Manchester believed that they could rid Highgate of its vampire, and the local publicity surrounding their rivalry inspired a mass vampire hunt with a mob of vampire hunters swarming the locked cemetery on Friday 13 March 1970, despite police efforts to control them. Today you'll have to pay an entrance fee to search for the vampire yourself, or book a tour to learn more.



Below: The famous Egyptian Avenue at Highgate; these tombs are now home to some rare orb weaver spiders



GRAVEYARD TREES

Cemeteries aren't just places for the dead - graveyard trees make them places of life too

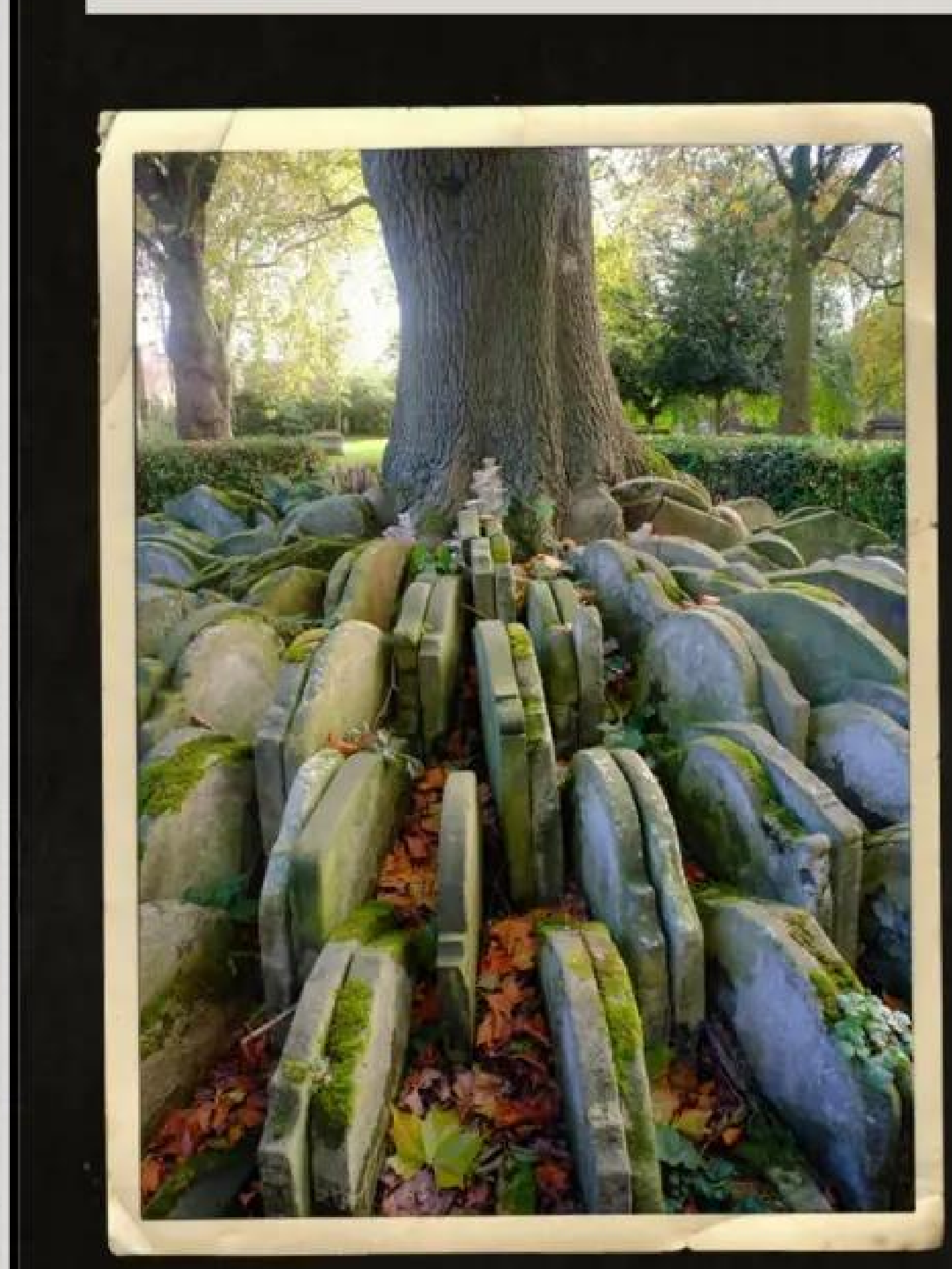
LLANGERNYW YEW

Location: St Digain's Churchyard, Llangernyw, Wales

St. Digain's Church is the home of the Llangernyw Yew, believed to be between 4,000 and 5,000 years old, according to various tests. If that age is right, then this yew tree is one of the oldest trees in the world. A different theory thinks the tree is only around 1,500 years old. The tree is fascinating for its unusual growth, being split in the middle. The church used to keep its oil tank between the two halves, but this was moved some years ago. Despite this, the tree's girth at ground level is almost 11 metres. It was designated as one of Fifty Great British Trees in 2002. Yews are often found in churchyards, and theories vary as to why. The most likely was for safety; the churchyard walls kept grazing cattle away from these poisonous trees. A different theory sees the yews planted to provide a source of wood for essential longbow manufacture.

THE HARDY TREE

Location: St Pancras Old Church, London, England



In 1862, the Midland Railway was due to cut through the churchyard at St Pancras. A young assistant architect named Thomas Hardy (yes, the author) was assigned the task of moving the graves from the affected section. The bodies were exhumed and reburied elsewhere, which just left the problem of what to do with the headstones. The gravestones were arranged in concentric circles around an ash tree, which became known as the Hardy Tree. We'll never know if he moved the stones himself or simply supervised the work, but the tree became indelibly linked with the author. The tree sadly fell in a storm in December 2022, and a new beech sapling was planted in the churchyard as a replacement. The remains of the ash tree has been left in the churchyard for biodiversity, but the sapling will not feature the same headstones adornment.

Image source: Getty; Alamy; Wiki

THE HAUNTED HEART OF BRITAIN

From ancient alleyways abound with alchemy to eerie underground stations, discover what lurks within the shadows of London

Founded by the Romans on land occupied by warring Gallic and Celtic tribes, magic has imbued the UK capital for thousands of years, from ancient Roman protection amulets to medieval spellcraft, Elizabethan sorcery, Renaissance alchemy and Victorian high magic. During the Elizabethan era, London became the largest and most congested city in Europe, home to alchemists, cunning folk and other professionals of the occult sciences, most notably John Dee. Dee's polished obsidian scrying mirror, his crystal ball and other magical relics can be found in the British Museum's Enlightenment Gallery. Dee is believed to have conjured up a demon to create the British Empire from a stone circle situated on a ley line located in Mudchute Park on the Isle of Dogs. Rumour has it his ritual accidentally led to the death of writer Christopher Marlowe.

Nicholas Hawksmoor, known as the Devil's Architect, built a number of notable churches across the city, whose locations are said to form a pentagram. Whether they do or not, his buildings are imbued with the

> "Dee is believed to have conjured up a demon to create the British Empire from a stone circle on the Isle of Dogs"

Location:
London,
England

Tip: Take advantage of one of the many paranormal and occult guided tours symbolism and imagery of gothic Paganism, Freemasonry and ancient Egypt.

Another place of interest is the home of former freemason, Sir John Soane, now a museum that holds the sarcophagus of King Seti I. There are various tours available across the city for those seeking to delve further into the occult, whether it be a trip to the former headquarters of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Wicca founder Gerald Gardner's London home, or even the spot where infamous occultist, Eliphas Levi, supposedly made an attempt to summon the dead.

Before you leave the city, be sure to head to some of the oldest and best occult bookshops as well. Watkins Books served Aleister Crowley and Golden Dawn member WB Yeats since opening its doors in 1893; The Atlantis Bookshop once hosted Gerald Gardner's coven meetings; and Treadwell's Books is a modern hub of all things esoteric.

As well as being a mecca for all things magic, London is home to some of the most haunted sites in Britain. From Highgate Cemetery (see page 64) to the notorious Tower of London (page 68), London's landmarks are teeming with the supernatural. Even London's museums are haunted – the British Museum is full of cursed artefacts acquired through rather dubious means, as well as numerous restless spirits that have been disturbing museum workers for decades. Other museums said to be rife with spectres include the Ragged School Museum in Tower Hamlets, The Clink Prison Museum (see page 69), Bruce Castle Museum in Tottenham and the Horniman Museum in Forest Hill. Don't forget to check out the creepy Old Operating Theatre Museum and St Bartholomew's Hospital Museum for added chill factor.

Head to any borough and you are sure to find more than your fair share of ghost stories. In Mayfair, you will discover the ghost of a young woman who committed suicide in the attic of 50 Berkeley Square. The Grenadier in Belgrave Square is one of London's most haunted pubs, boasts some great, hearty food and is a mere stone's throw away from Harrod's. Other haunted pubs include The Old Queen's Head in Islington, The Flask in Highgate (where one of the first ever autopsies took place), The Spaniards Inn in Hampstead and The Ten Bells in Spitalfields (see page 43).

Not far from Jack the Ripper's old hunting grounds of Whitechapel, you'll find Liverpool Street Underground Station – built upon Bedlam Burial Ground, where plague victims were cast into a mass grave from the 16th to 18th centuries and whose ghosts are said to still roam. You're not even safe from spirits in London by taking a relaxing walk through Hyde Park – it's home to the famous pet cemetery? Located behind Victoria Gate Lodge and near the former execution ground of Tyburn, its often off-limits but guided tours can be booked in advance (although they sell out quickly).

THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE

WEST END PHANTOMS

You might spot a ghost at your favourite musical...

London's theatres are rife with spirits. Most notably, the Theatre Royal on Drury Lane – which is thought to be the most haunted theatre in the world. The current theatre dates back to 1812 but it is the fourth Theatre Royal on the site since 1663. It has several ghosts, including performers Charles Macklin, Joseph Grimaldi (in the form of a disembodied head of a clown), and Dan Leno, but the most famous is the Man in Grey who sits in the same Upper Circle seat at the end of the fourth row before heading along the walkway and disappearing through the wall – but only when the show is set to be a hit.

Legend has it that he was a wealthy 18th-century gentleman who was having an affair with an actress. He met her in the Upper Circle but one night, his rival waited for him instead, stabbing him in the chest and hiding his body in an alcove that he walled up. Workers found a skeleton with a knife through its ribs in a wall cavity in the Upper Circle during refurbishment work in 1848.

Other London theatres thought to be haunted include the Adelphi (haunted by a former actor who was murdered at the stage door), the Dominion (opened upon the former site of a brewery where eight people drowned as a result of a beer vat explosion), the Garrick, the Lyceum Theatre and the other Theatre Royal located on Haymarket.

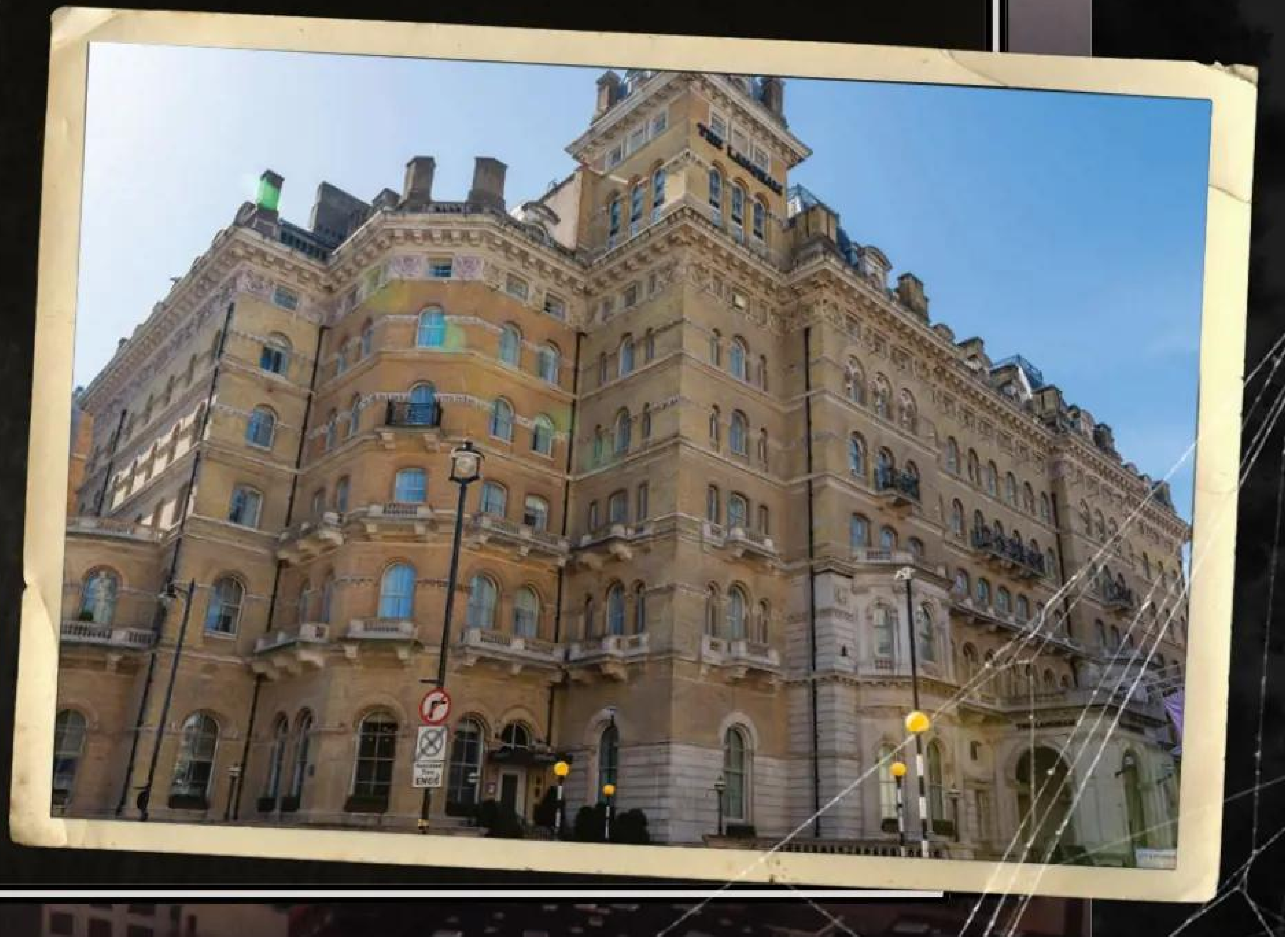
SLEEP WITH ONE EYE OPEN

If you are searching for somewhere to stay, why not London's most spooktacular hotel?

Situated just off Oxford Street, the 1865-built Langham is one of London's top five-star retreats. But attempt to bed down for the night, and you might be in for a spooky surprise. Plenty of spectres haunt the halls, including former high-profile guests Emperor Napoleon III, and a German prince who committed suicide by leaping from the hotel's fourth floor. However, the most malevolent ghost resides in room 333.

Every October, the ghost of a honeymooning Victorian doctor who murdered his new wife – then killed himself – is said to stalk anyone brave enough to stay in this room. Take the terrified BBC journalist, James Alexander Gordon, who in 1973 saw a bright green ball of light that slowly morphed into the shape of the Victorian doctor. He hastily fled, before returning with a colleague, who corroborated Gordon's tale.

The ghost doctor's most recent appearance was in 2014, when it freaked out members of the England cricket team. Apparently, one player even awoke in the middle of the night, and went to sleep in the room of his teammate!



PETRIFYING PRISONS

It's been more than a life sentence for these incarcerated spirits, still trapped within the walls of the prisons they were left to perish within

THE TOWER OF LONDON

Location: London, England

Prison, menagerie, execution site, arsenal; the Tower of London has been many things. Tradition and superstition still rules this medieval fortress with the iconic Yeoman Warders, a.k.a. Beefeaters, patrolling the grounds decked in red Tudor uniforms and a flock of clipped-wing resident ravens acting as the guardians of the Tower – according to 17th-century belief,should they leave, both Tower and state will fall.

Prominent prisoners included Anne Boleyn, Henry VI, Lady Jane Grey, Guy Fawkes, and the boy princes, all of whom reportedly never left. Headless Anne Boleyn wanders corridors or leads a procession down the chapel aisle to her burial site. Henry VI, stabbed while praying, appears in the Wakefield Tower at the last stroke of midnight. Teenage Lady Jane Grey roams the battlements, and Guy Fawkes howls in the Council Chamber. Edward V and his brother Richard appear in nightshirts clutching each other in the White Tower, also haunted by the wispy, unidentified White Lady, whose stench of cheap perfume makes visitors sick.

But it's not just the Tower that's cursed. Centuries of violence seems to have seeped deep into soil on which it stands. The surrounding area, historically known for its debauchery and squalor, was the hunting ground of Jack the Ripper and a regular haunt of numerous ghosts.

THE CLINK PRISON MUSEUM

Location: London, England

Before "The Clink" was a slang term for a prison or jail, it was one of the oldest prisons in England, operating between 1144 and 1780. Located in central London, the prison was built as part of the Bishop of Winchester's residence, Winchester Palace. Originally containing two prisons: one for men, and one for women, it would house those awaiting trial for charges ranging from petty crimes to religious offences such as heresy. Today, a museum stands on the grounds of the original prison as the Clink was destroyed on more than one occasion. There are few remnants of the original structure so the museum mainly focuses on the items from its 600 years of history as well as offering some hands-on experiences. If you've ever wondered what it would feel like to be inside a medieval prison, this is the closest you will get (we hope). If you want to take your paranormal experience a bit further, vigils and seances are performed at night as well as ghost hunting experiences. The screams of those who were imprisoned, the rattling of chains and slamming of metal have been heard by those who dared to enter at night.

The Clink Prison Museum

Above: The Clink was burned down once in 1450 and again in 1780. Some original elements still remain however

LITTLEDEAN JAIL

Location: Cinderford, England

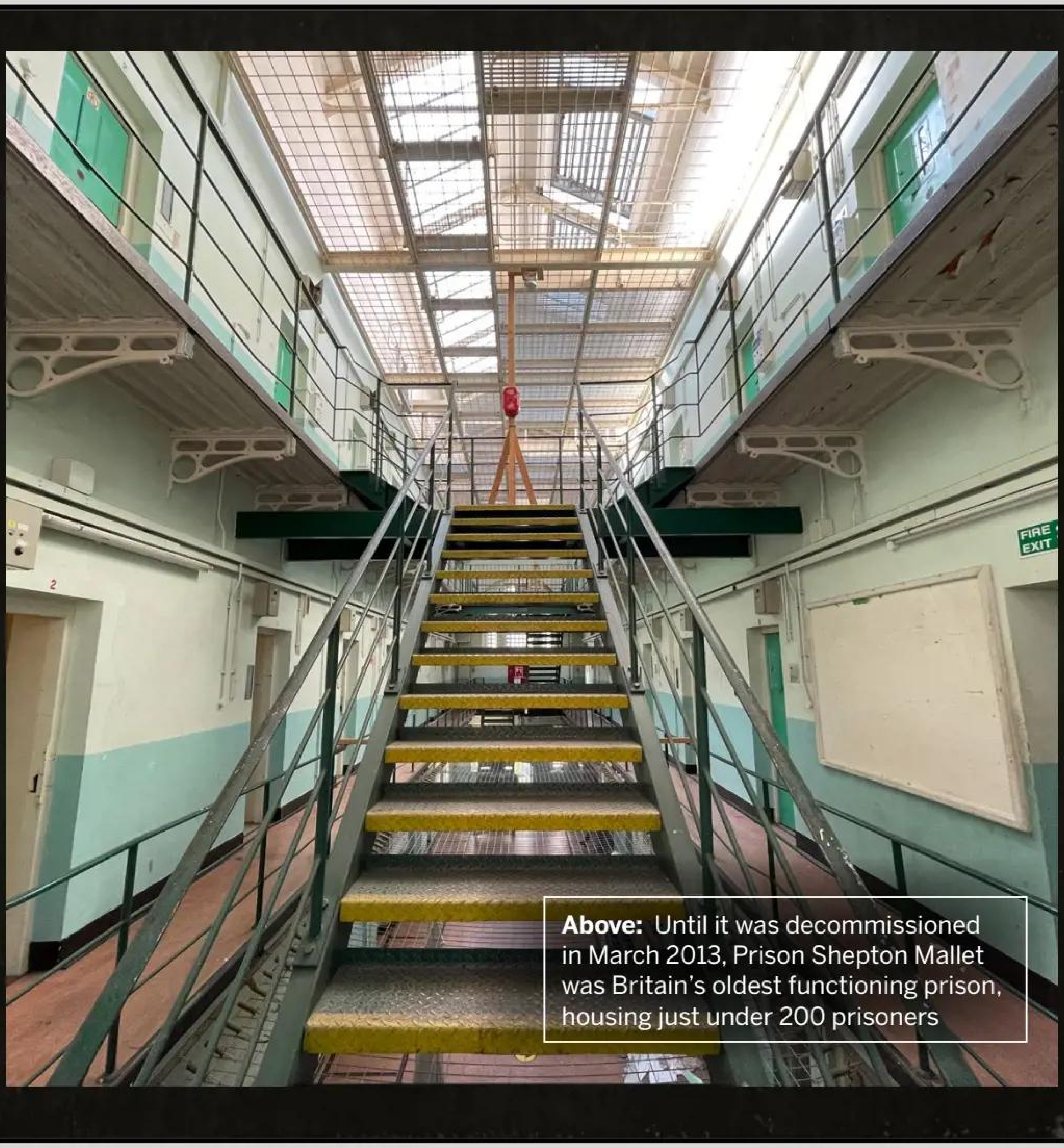
Not far from the scenic Royal Forest of Dean is one of England's dark tourism hotspots. Opening in 1791, at the time of its construction Littledean Jail was state-of-the-art thanks to it being designed by the leading prison architect, William Blackburn. The imposing Grade II listed building still stands as it did when it was first constructed, but today, instead of housing inmates, it is home to its owner Andy Jones, who bought the facility in 2003 and uses it to house his personal collection of objects covering crime and the macabre. While those under 18 are not prohibited from visiting the museum, it is recommended that they are not brought in due to the nature of the items on display.

SHEPTON MALLET PRISON

Location: Shepton Mallet, England

When it first opened in 1625, the prison was chaotic. Men, women, and children were held in the same place. The conditions were poor and gaolers didn't care much for discipline or cleanliness, so disease and disarray were common. From the 17th to early 19th century more than 200 crimes were punishable by execution and this legal system, known as the "Bloody Code" is why the exact number of people who were executed at the prison is unknown, we do know that between 1889 and 1926, seven people were put to death and then buried in unmarked graves within the prison.

Today, there are various tours around the grounds of the prison, including Ghost Tours every Thursday evening. As you're taken through the grounds, lit only by torchlight, guides will explain the legends surrounding the grounds including stories around the infamous Kray twins, who were imprisoned here during the Second World War. It is advised that you dress warmly as many have claimed to feel cold chills, especially in C Wing, the former women's wing, where a lady in white has been seen wandering.



Above: Until it was decommissioned in March 2013, Prison Shepton Mallet was Britain's oldest functioning prison, housing just under 200 prisoners

Image source: Getty; Alamy

BODMIN JAIL

Location: Bodmin, England

Operating from 1779, it was built by prisoners of war and was the first prison in Britain to house inmates in individual cells as well as the first to separate male and female prisoners. The prison closed in 1927, was turned into a casino, then a nightclub until it finally closed its doors in the 1940s when it was left in a state of disrepair. It wasn't until 2015 when a businessman on holiday fell for the building along with its story and wanted the prison a new life. A £40 million renovation over five years restored the prison, adding a visitor centre as well as a 70-bedroom hotel within the walls of the prison. Over the years there have been several sightings of ghosts and other hauntings. In 2005 the prison featured on an episode of *Most Haunted* and in more recent years, the local news have reported on one sighting of William Hampton, who was convicted of murder and was the last man to be hanged in the prison. If you want to experience your own sighting, Bodmin offers after-dark ghost experiences where you follow an investigator on the search for activity. Tools and recording equipment can be provided and anything found is documented and can be contributed to the jail's research. Finish your evening with a stay at the Bodmin Jail Hotel, a 5-star boutique that keeps many original features from the building.

THE BATS OF BODMIN JAIL

For those who have a fascination with bats, two thirds of species native to Britain can be found around Bodmin Jail. When it was abandoned, the nocturnal mammals moved in and were living in it for decades before the renovations began. They're now part of the jail's story and as part of the restoration process, a habitat was created so they could remain part of it.

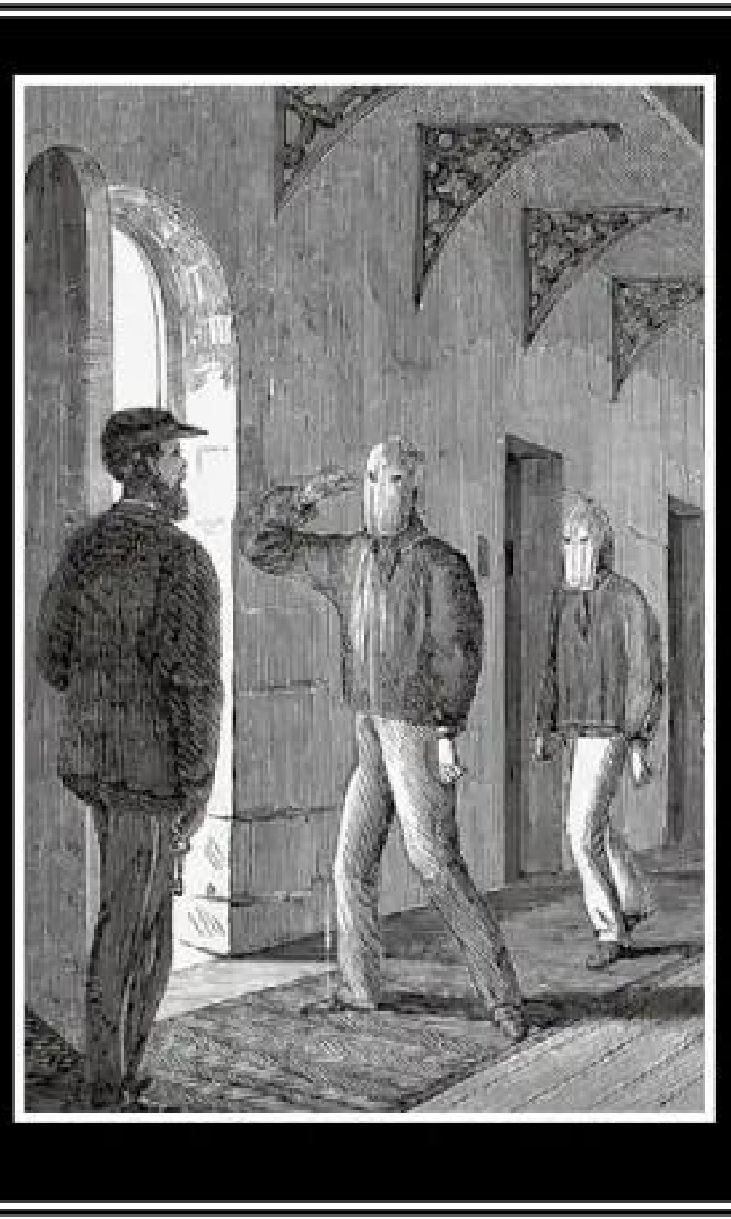
Image source: Getty; Alamy

RUTHIN GAOL

Location: Ruthin, Wales

Originally established in 1654, what remains of the prison today is from its expansion in the early 19th century to meet with the reformed standards. Ruthin Gaol was designed in the Pentonville style, which was created to prevent prisoners from interacting with each other, therefore reducing criminal behaviour. Prisoners would work under the 'silent system' where they would perform repetitive tasks for hours on end, only get one hour outside and during this time they would be forced to wear a Scotch cap, which obscured their eyes and face so they couldn't even make eye contact with other prisoners. It was believed that this would reform prisoners but this system ended up causing more problems as there was no evidence that this worked and the mental toll would have led to a higher suicide rate. When you have a place that must have held so much suffering, stories of ghosts and hauntings are sure to follow. While it is not known how many prisoners died of illness or disease, we do know that only one was ever executed, and that was William Hughes. He was hanged in 1903 for murdering his wife and today you can visit the cell where he spent his last night and many have claimed to have felt an uneasy presence. The most famous prisoner of Ruthin Gaol is John Jones, also known as the 'Welsh Houdini' or "Coch Bach y Bala" in Welsh, meaning the Little Redhead of Bala. Spending the majority of his life behind bars for various offences, he escaped from Ruthin Gaol on more than one occasion, perhaps most famously by simply picking his lock and walking out the front door when the guards were having supper.

THE SILENT SYSTEM



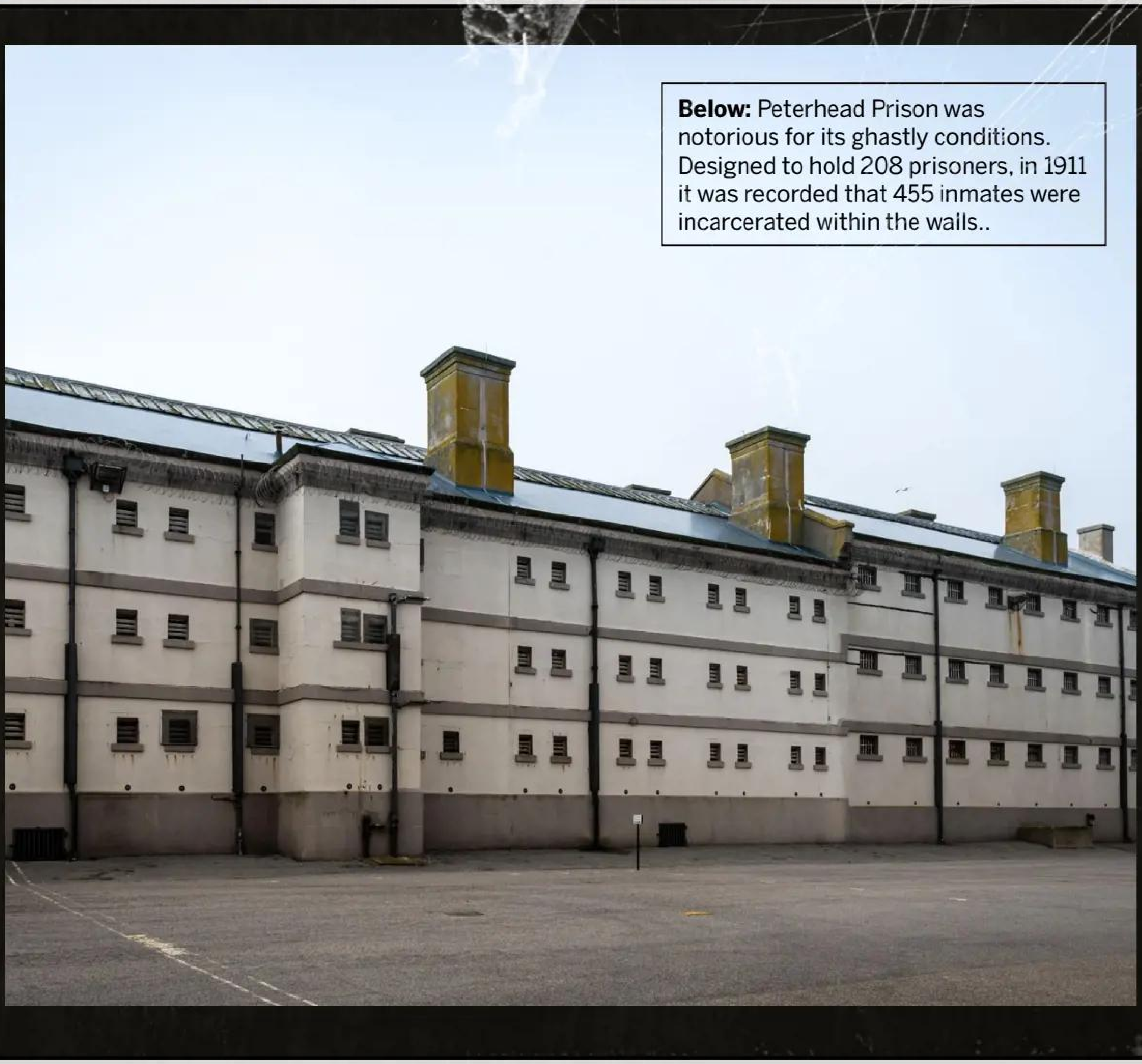
Many 19th-century prisons adopted a system where prisoners couldn't communicate with each other and wore masks known as Scotch caps in the hope that this would stop them influencing each other. Changes were made in the early 20th century as the system failed to work and being imprisoned was seen as punishment enough.

Above: Ruthin Gaol is the only Pentonville style prison that you can visit. See what prisoners went through each day and how it would have driven them crazy

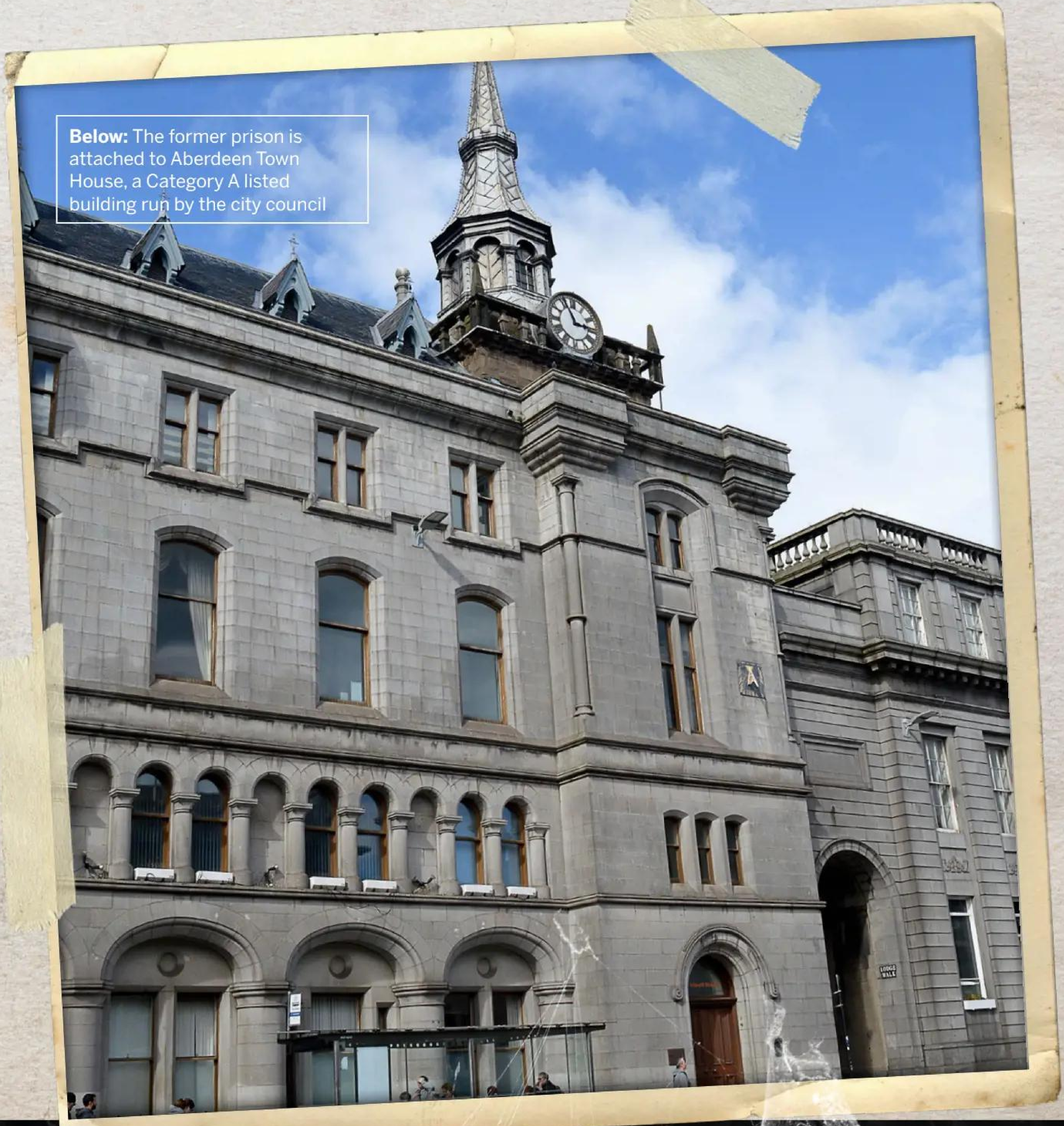
PETERHEAD PRISON

Location: Peterhead, Scotland

Originally Scotland's only convict prison, built around 1888, before Peterhead Prison was built, Scottish convicts had to be transported to England. Peterhead was notorious for its miserable conditions, disorderly inmates, and was referred to as "Scotland's gulag" and the "hate factory". In a 2005 inspection it was noted that some prisoners were still using buckets as a toilet. The prison was designed to hold 208 inmates, but it is reported that at one time it held as many as 455. It was closed in 2013 and in 2016 it reopened as a museum with guided tours that tell the story of some of the notorious prisoners such as James Crosbie, one of Britain's most wanted. Being infamous for its poor conditions and breeding contempt, haunting spirits and malicious entities are bound to be reported. The museum offers ghost tours and provides equipment for you to communicate with the paranormal.



Below: Peterhead Prison was notorious for its ghastly conditions. Designed to hold 208 prisoners, in 1911 it was recorded that 455 inmates were incarcerated within the walls..



Below: The former prison is attached to Aberdeen Town House, a Category A listed building run by the city council

THE TOLBOOTH

Location: Aberdeen, Scotland

One of the oldest buildings in Aberdeen, the Tolbooth is an early 17th century building and is said to be one of the most haunted in the city. The number of people imprisoned and accused of witchcraft in the subsequent century following the Tolbooth's construction was significantly higher in Scotland when compared to other countries across Europe; the Tolbooth housed many alleged witches and several were executed publicly outside of the prison walls. In 1995 the local council took control over the former jail and opened it to paranormal investigators. The Tolbooth now operates as a museum, telling the story of those who were kept locked up, those accused of witchcraft, as well as the Jacobites who were held at the prison. One of the more interesting items on display is of the 'Scottish Maiden,' an early form of the guillotine that was used for executing prisoners. Admission to the museum is free, but like many old buildings, its narrow passageways aren't very disability friendly.

Image source: Getty; Alamy; Wiki

THE ISLE OF AVALON

Glastonbury is a town with an abundance of history, legends, magic, religion, nature and charm

Glastonbury is a town brimming with paranormal history and it can feel as if every road is overflowing with the past. If only they could talk! We start our tour of Glastonbury in the middle of the town, at St Margaret's Chapel on Magdalene Street. Dating back to the 13th century, this building offered shelter, food and medical aid to pilgrims visiting the nearby abbey. What remains today are faithful restorations of the buildings. A ten-minute walk from the chapel will take you to Glastonbury Abbey. Historical evidence points the Abbey's origins to the Saxons in the late 7th century, however some believe that the monastery dates back to the 1st century CE and was founded by Joseph of Arimathea, allegedly visiting after the death of Jesus, who built the Abbey to hold the Holy Grail. Perhaps more well known however, are the abbey's links to the legends of King Arthur. Legend tells that Arthur was taken to Glastonbury to be laid to rest, but when is not known. In 1190 monks claimed to have found an unmarked tomb containing the bones of Arhur and his wife Guinevere. These remains were reburied in a ceremony attended by

Right: King Arthur's final resting place is found among the remains of Glastonbury Abbey. It is said that he is buried inside a black marble tomb

Location: Somerset, England

Tips: To avoid crowds don't visit during Glastonbury Festival (usually held late-June)

King Edward I and Queen Eleanor of Castile, and the alleged resting place can be found at the remnants of Glastonbury Abbey. It is purported that the discovery of Arthur's remains was a publicity stunt by the monks to garner attention for the Abbey and raise money for its renovation after a fire in 1184.

While on the subject of famous resting places in Glastonbury, a short drive or walk away from the abbey is Glastonbury Cemetery and the grave of Dion Fortune. Fortune was an author and one of the most influential people in the world of the occult in the 20th century. She cofounded the Fraternity of the Inner Light and many of her books have influenced modern paganism. Her grave is easy to spot as it is regularly covered in flowers and any fan of the occult should visit to pay their respects or perhaps receive some spiritual motivation.

Overlooking the town is Glastonbury Tor, a tapered hill that has become an icon of the town, rich in historical, spiritual and mythological significance. It is believed that the Tor is Avalon, the island from Arthurian legend. While the town is not an island today, thousands of years ago the base would have been covered in water and marshlands, and the earliest name for the Tor is Ynys Gwydr, which translates to Isle of Glass.

If you're looking for somewhere to stay to complete a ghostly getaway, we recommend the George and Pilgrim Hotel. Located on the High Street, just from the outside you can tell that there is a lot of history and character to this building. The story goes that there were tunnels going from the hotel to the abbey, and one woman would use these to liaise with a monk whom she fell in love with. Depending on who you ask, when the two were caught, the monk was, arrested, killed, or he committed suicide. Today, guests have claimed to have seen a monk wandering the hallways while others say they've seen a female figure dressed in white, looking lost. Even if you don't believe in these stories, the hotel's interior can certainly evoke your imagination.

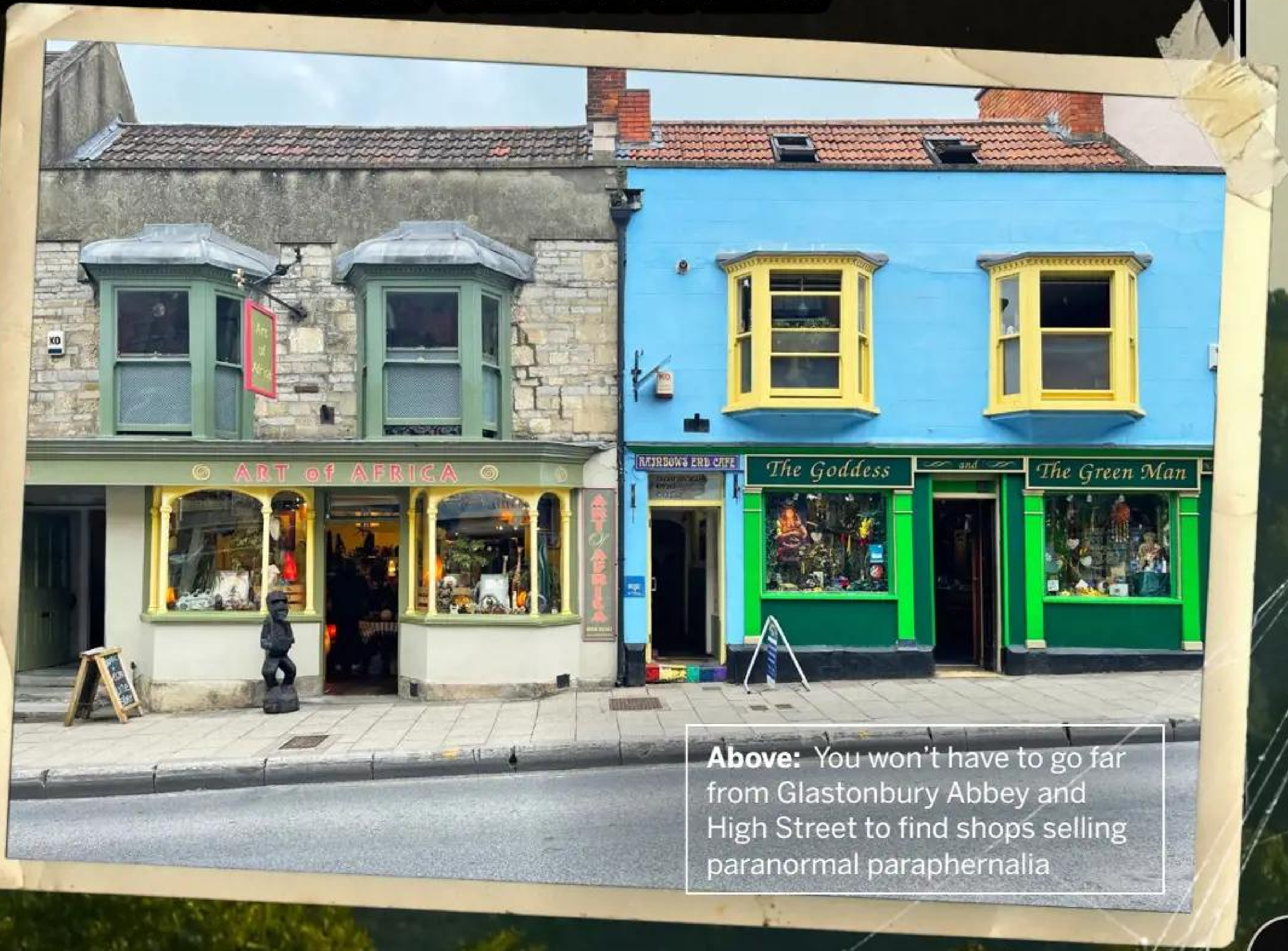
Above: Dion Fortune might not be a name that everyone knows, but she was crucial in introducing many in the early 20th century to the occult

Below: Glastonbury Tor has attracted visitors for centuries not only because of its fantastic and fanciful mythology, but because it's beautiful

SATISFYING THE SPIRITUAL SHOPPER

Spooky stores abound here

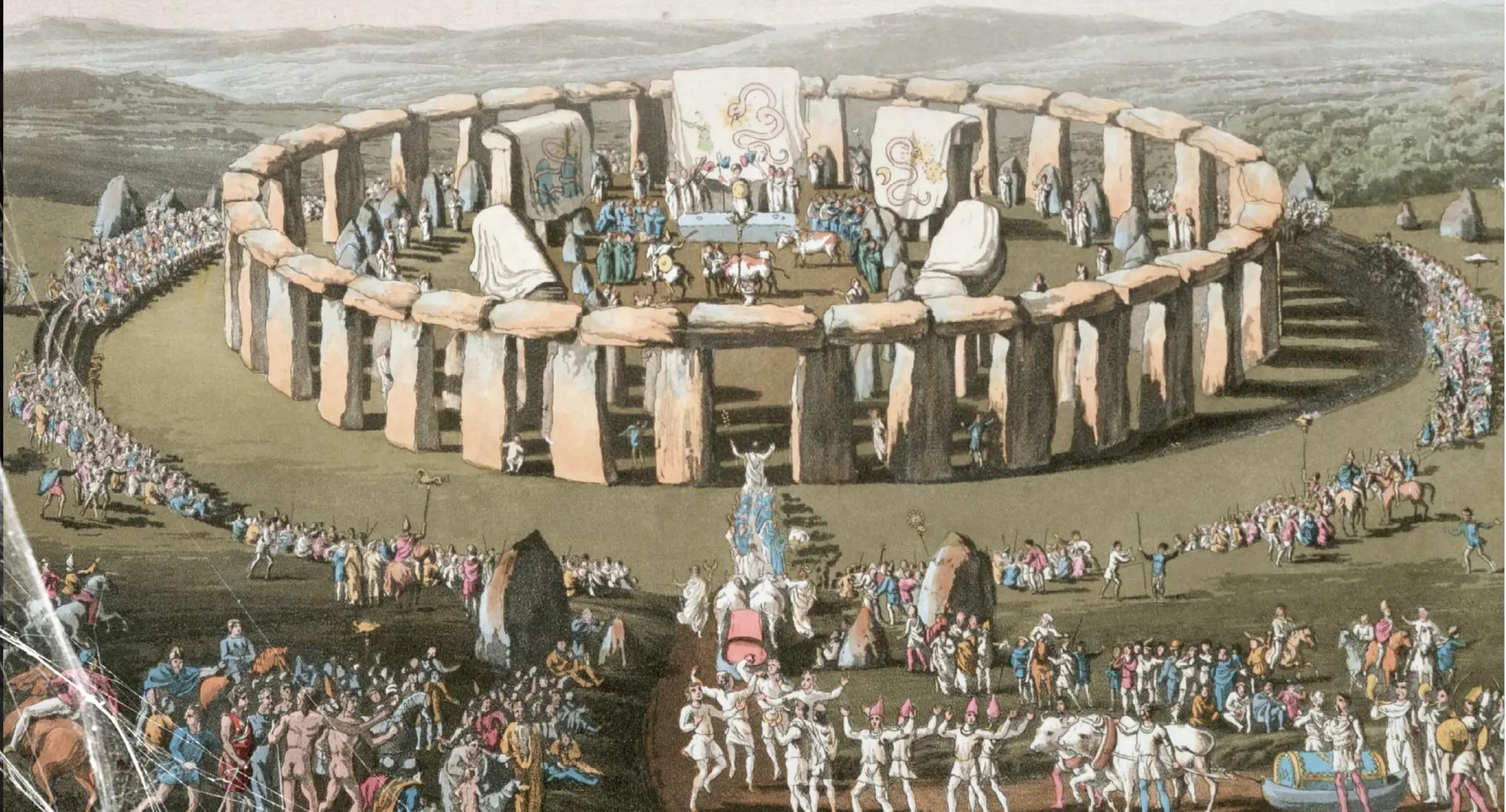
Being a town steeped in mysticism and the paranormal, there are an abundance of stores catering to those wanting to explore that world. The two oldest shops are Man, Myth & Magik and The Goddess and the Green Man, Both are around 30 years old and sell all sorts of charms, tarot cards, incense, candles and more. The staff are always welcoming to those with questions, so if you need ideas on where to eat or visit, ask away.



Above: You won't have to go far from Glastonbury Abbey and High Street to find shops selling paranormal paraphernalia

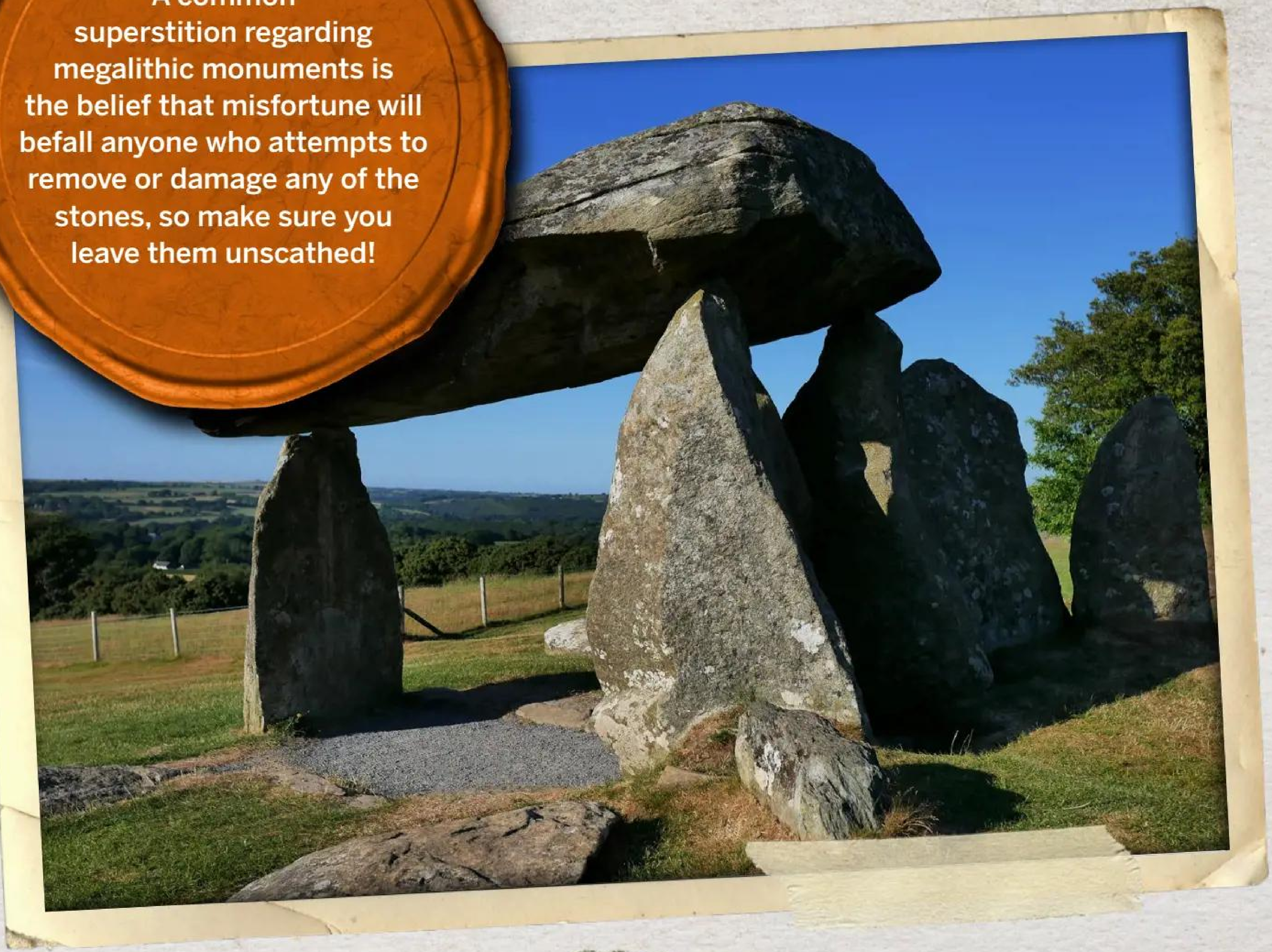
PAGAN PORTALS

Retrace the footsteps of our ancestors and explore Britain's pre-Christian ancient stone relics rich in magic and steeped with supernatural significance – from 5000 year old megalithic monuments to 2000 year old Roman ruins, here lie the UK's oldest restless spirits



TIPS

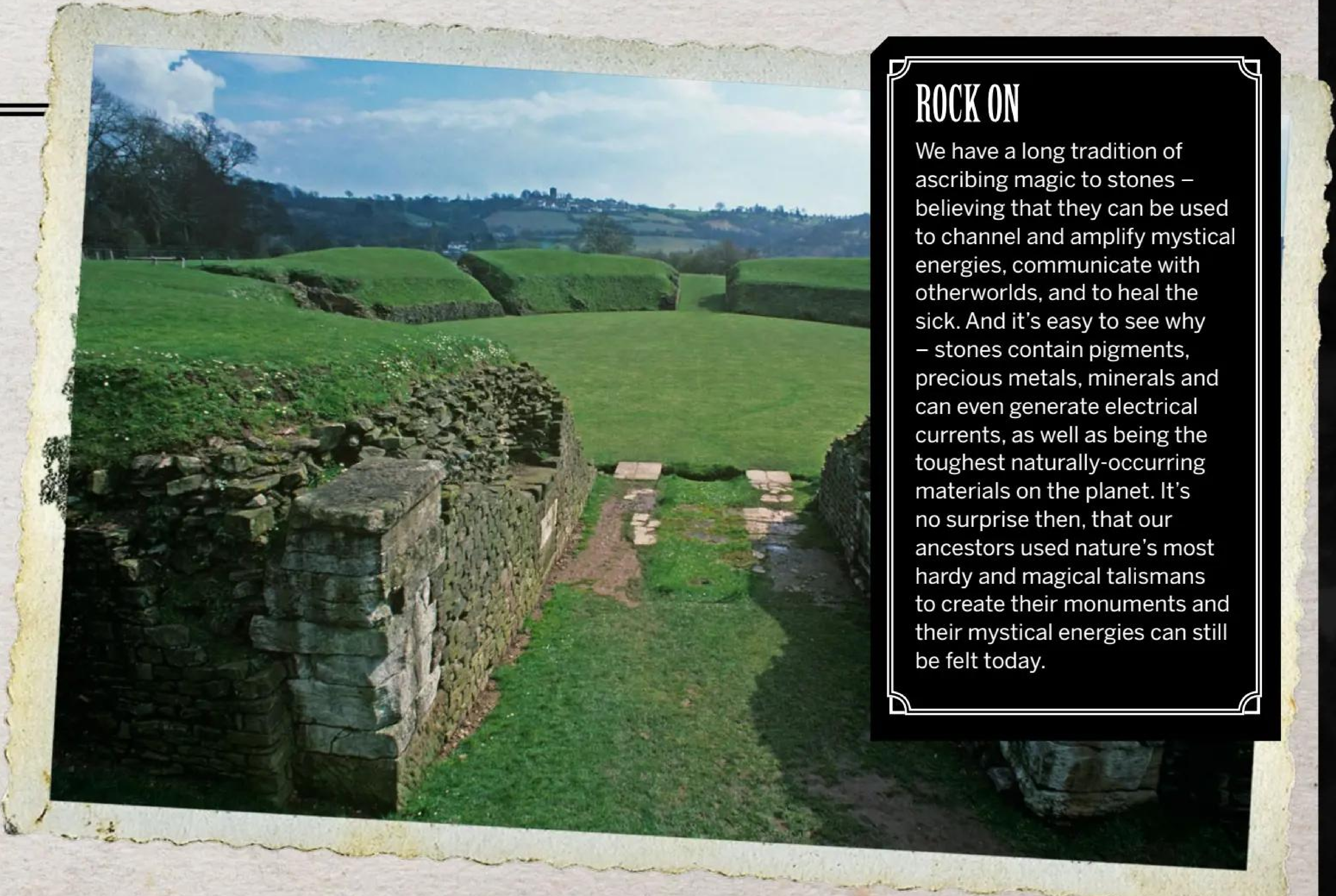
A common superstition regarding megalithic monuments is the belief that misfortune will befall anyone who attempts to remove or damage any of the stones, so make sure you leave them unscathed!



PENTRE IFAN

Location: Pembrokeshire, Wales

This Neolithic chambered tomb is forged from the same bluestones that can be found at Stonehenge – although they didn't have to travel anywhere near as far as those at Stonehenge, as this revered dolerite rock is unique to the mystical Preseli Hills that tower above Pentre Ifan. Many believe the burial chamber is a portal to the Welsh otherworld, Annwn, thanks to its giant capstone precariously balanced upon two standing stones – creating a doorway. An ethereal procession of robed figures are believed to appear amongst the standing stones under the moonlight. Whether fairies dancing or spirits of druids performing sacred rites, you are most likely to spot them at twilight and during the summer months.



ROCK ON

We have a long tradition of ascribing magic to stones – believing that they can be used to channel and amplify mystical energies, communicate with otherworlds, and to heal the sick. And it's easy to see why – stones contain pigments, precious metals, minerals and can even generate electrical currents, as well as being the toughest naturally-occurring materials on the planet. It's no surprise then, that our ancestors used nature's most hardy and magical talismans to create their monuments and their mystical energies can still be felt today.

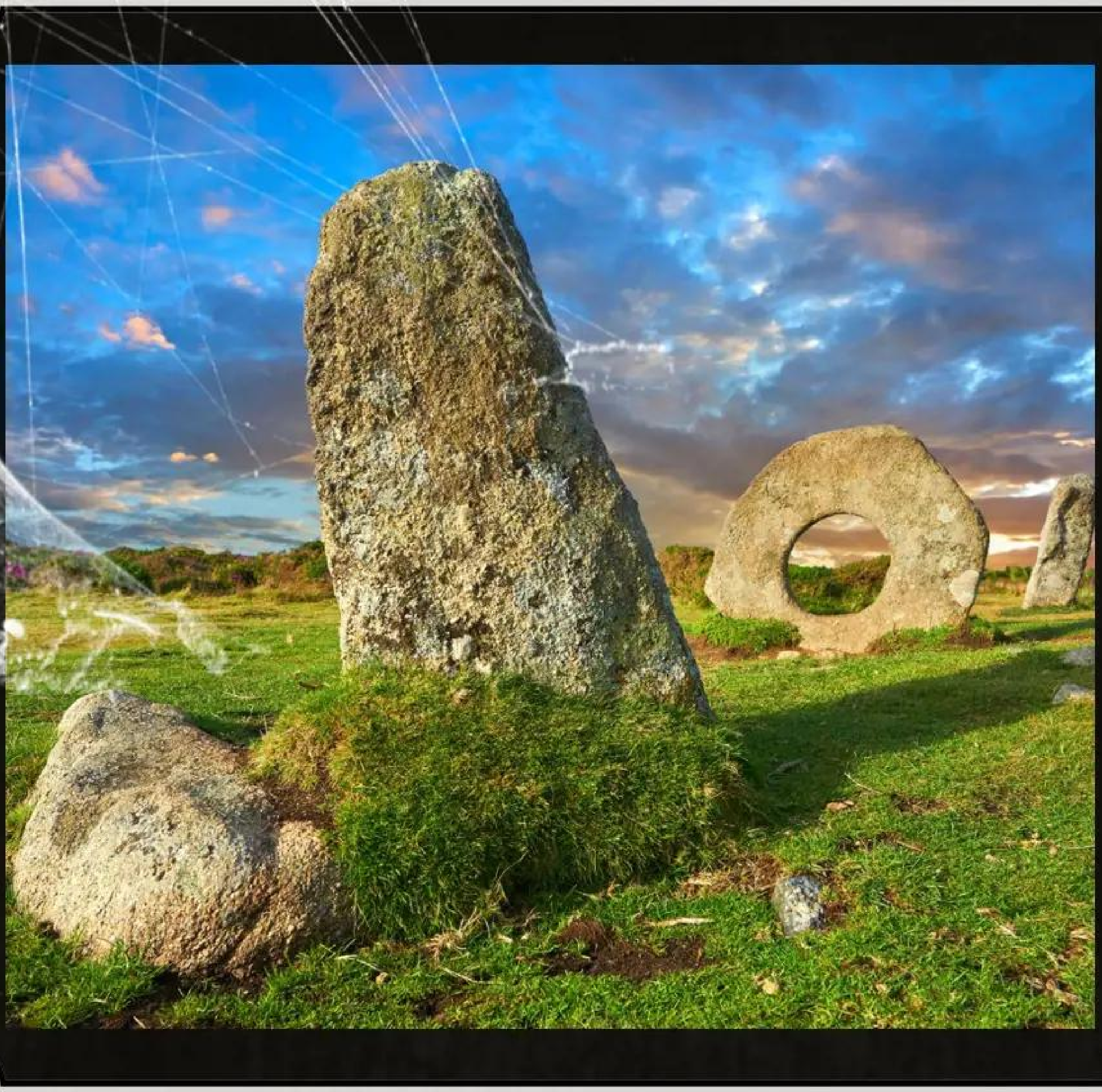
CAERLEON

Location: Newport, Gwent, Wales

Beneath the unassuming, picturesque South Wales town of Caerleon lies the remains of one of only three permanent Roman legionary fortresses in Britain, Isca Augusta. Occupied for over 200 years, much of the significant buildings survived well into the medieval period so it's no surprise that the area is teeming with pagan energy. Its amphitheatre is the most complete left in Britain and is allegedly still active with the ghosts of Roman soldiers having been spotted on numerous occasions marching through its ruins, which are free to visit.

According to Geoffrey of Monmouth's medieval text, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, it was at Caerleon – 'City Of The Legion' – that the mythical King Arthur held his court. In Elizabethan Britain, it was the ruins of the amphitheatre that was rumoured to have been Arthur's elusive Round Table. The town itself is also the birthplace of Welsh author and brief member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Arthur Machen. Machen was fascinated by Arthurian legend and made it his lifelong quest to discover the Holy Grail. His works, most notably *The Great God Pan*, took influence from paganism, the occult and the rich mythological landscape of his homeland. Nearby Twmbarlwm (page 117) provided the inspiration for his novel *Hill of Dreams* and his works inspired many horror and fantasy writers including HP Lovecraft, Stephen King and filmmaker Guillermo del Toro. Head down the street from the National Roman Legion Museum to 33 High Street to see the house in which Machen was born, marked with a blue plaque.

Image source: Adobe Stock, Getty, Alamy



MÊN-AN-TOL

Location: Southwest Cornwall, England

Cornwall is rich with mystical energies and ancient stones. Mên-An-Tol consists of three upright stones and its Cornish name translates to "the stone with the hole". This is thanks to the central, round stone with a half meter diameter hole in it. Known locally as Crick Stone, it dates to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age and it is unknown whether the hole in the central stone occurred naturally or was deliberately carved into it. Whatever the cause, the hole is supposed to have a fairy guardian hidden within it and healing properties when you pass through it. According to folklore, a changeling baby was passed through the hole by its mother and the real child was returned to her. The stone will also cure a child of rickets and children would be ritualistically passed through its hole, naked, nine times. The stone was also used to aid fertility – it's said if a woman passes through the hole backwards, seven times on a full moon, she will conceive.

STANTON DREW

Location: Chew Valley, Somerset, England

Stanton Drew's ritual landscape consists of the second largest stone circle in Britain, known as The Great Circle, two smaller stone circles to northeast and southeast of The Circle, a group of three large stones referred to as the Cove, and a single vertical standing stone known as Hautville's Quoit – legend has it that it was tossed there by a giant from the top of Maes Knoll, but it was likely once part of a larger monument.

The circles are believed to be the petrified remains of a wedding party who were cursed by the Devil after they partied into the Sabbath – The Cove are rumoured to be what is left of the bride, the groom and parson. The Cove is situated in the pub garden of The Druid's Arms. Stop by for a pint to toast the newly weds and you won't just be up and close to an ancient monument – you're likely to be getting cosy with a few ghosts too. The Great Circle has 26 surviving standing stones, but it isn't advised to count them – if you do, you'll drop dead before counting the last one.

Did you know?

The British Isles are home to a significant number of ancient megalithic monuments, including over 1000 stone circles

Image source: Getty; Alamy

STONEHENGE

Location: Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, England

Situated right in the centre of the paranormal hotspot that is Salisbury Plain (see page 110), Stonehenge is an incredible example of a megalithic stone circle featuring gigantic trilithons that date back over 4000 years and have, unbelievably, survived until this day.

Originally a larger arrangement of stones, Stonehenge has bewitched and bewildered humanity for centuries, inspiring tales of sorcery and ritual – including a theory that it was conjured by the wizard Merlin. 18th century antiquarian John Aubrey theorised it was built by the druids in 400 BCE as a temple where they would perform their alleged human sacrifices, casting a sinister shadow over the site that has remained to this day. However, while it was no doubt used by the Celts, the structure dates back thousands of years before their existence.

Numerous paranormal occurrences have been reported within the stone circle, including ghosts, phantom aircraft, strange hummings and eerie electrical-like energies. One night in 1971, a group of hippies decided to camp inside the stone circle as a thunderstorm tore through Salisbury Plain. Lightning reportedly struck the ancient monument, and there was a loud startling bang coinciding with the stones emitting a bright blue light. The hippies vanished into thin air, leaving behind nothing but tent pegs and a smoldering campfire – allegedly sucked up into a vortex. Another storm during the 1980s was supposedly triggered by university students researching the stones and disrupting its ancient spirits.

Like many ancient monuments, it is aligned with the sun. On the summer solstice, the sun rises over the large sarsen stone known as the Heel Stone and sets behind it on the winter solstice – the purpose of which remains a mystery. Twice every year, people still gather at the stones to witness the solstices and the stunning feat of engineering our ancestors put in so much effort to create, and if you can manage to attend on either the longest or shortest day of the year, it is by far the most magical way to experience the site. If you want to visit at any other time, make sure you book a tour so you can see the stones up close, as access is restricted.

AVEBURY

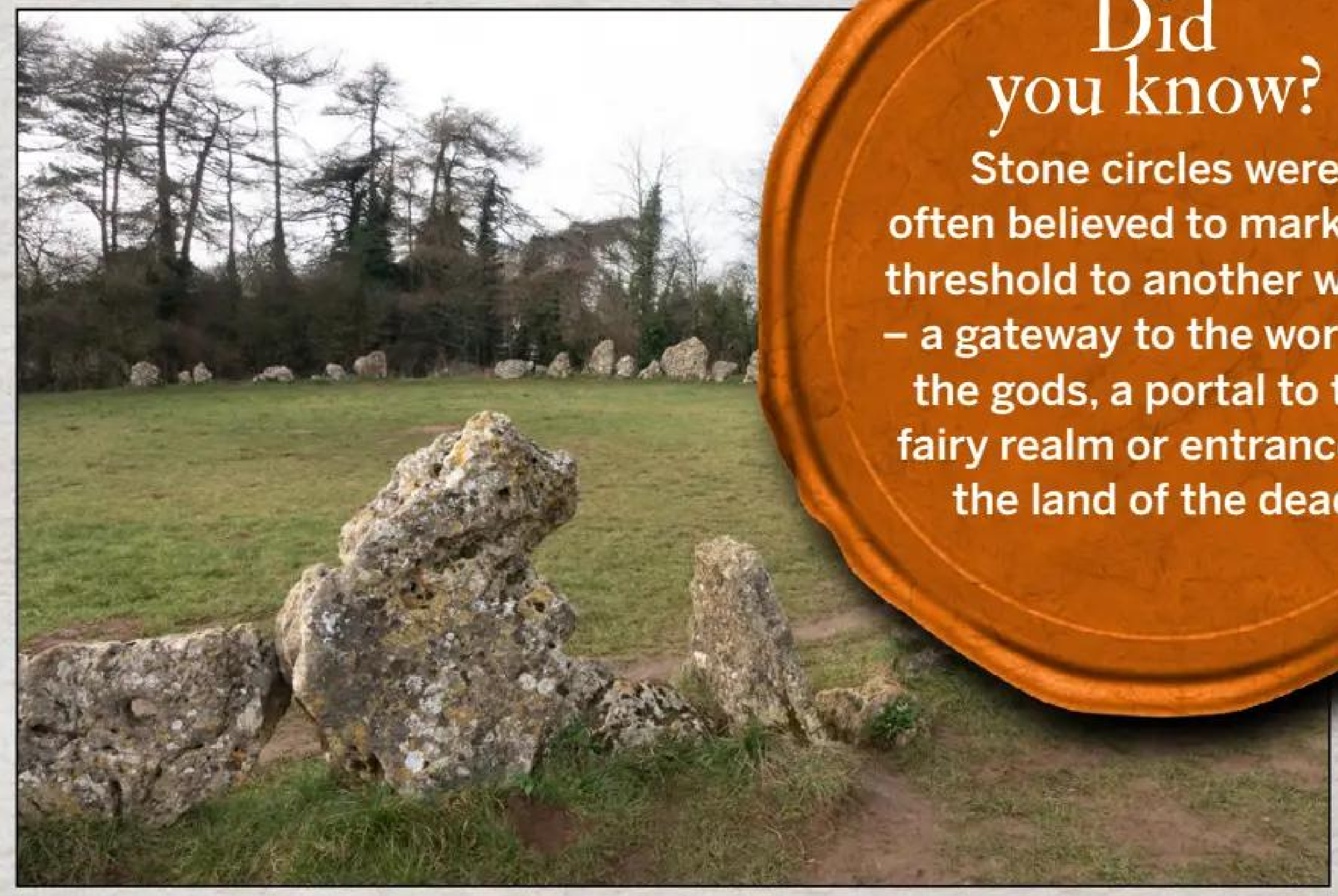
Location: Wiltshire, England,

Avebury is the UK's largest diameter stone circle and a superhenge, built between 2850 and 2200 BCE. Its surviving henge encircles part of Avebury village and its outlining stone circle is the largest in Britain. Within its larger stone circle, which originally contained 100 stones, are two smaller stone circles. The henge and stone circles are part of the Avebury World Heritage Site, which also includes West Kennet Avenue, the nearby causewayed enclosure of Windmill Hill, the impressive West Kennet Long Barrow burial chambers and Silbury Hill.

Allegedly, the stones are cursed – if you dare move them, you will awaken the wrath of their godly guardians. During the 14th century, one man was crushed to death when locals attempted to move them. Similar fates almost met the 18th and 19th century folk who broke up and reused the monuments for construction of new buildings, when the stones sent them warnings in the form of close calls. Today, disembodied voices can be heard singing and ghostly figures can be seen around the stones at night.

Shrouded in mystery, Silbury Hill is a huge artificial hill built in around 2400 BCE that stands at approximately the same height as the Egyptian pyramids, also constructed around this time. Nearby is West Kennet Long Barrow, built in the early Neolithic period and used not only as a burial chamber but as a site of ceremony. Unsurprisingly, this ancient house of the dead is reputed to be haunted, most notably by the ghost of a druidic robed man and his loyal hound, who can be seen standing on top of the barrow at sunrise on Midsummer's Day. If you plan on heading inside the chambered tomb, make sure to take a torch!

The majority of Avebury World Heritage Site can be reached on foot from Avebury village, where you can also learn more about all the local megaliths at the Alexander Keiller Museum.



Did you know?

Stone circles were often believed to mark the threshold to another world – a gateway to the world of the gods, a portal to the fairy realm or entrance to the land of the dead

THE ROLLRIGHT STONES

Location: Long Compton, Oxfordshire/ Warwickshire border, England

The Rollright Stones are a complex of three limestone monuments in the Cotswolds. The oldest of the monuments are the Whispering Knights. 400 metres west are the King's Men. The stones are placed very closely, and may have originally formed a continuous barrier without any gaps, and there has been evidence of a fire pit in their centre. The King's Stone stands 76 metres north of the King's Men. According to local legend they were once a king and his knights who were turned to stone by a witch while crossing the country. At the base of the King's stone is thought to lie a portal to a fairy kingdom, and those who are pure of heart can spot the fae frolicking near the Whispering Knights. Supposedly, it is impossible to count all of the King's Men, and should you count them three times and find the number the same each time, your heart's desire shall be fulfilled. Today, the site is run by a trust who charge a small entry fee, and Pagan groups are able to book slots to perform ritual ceremonies too.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

LONG MEG & HER DAUGHTERS

Location: Hunsonby, Cumbria, England

Besides Stonehenge, this incredible stone circle is, according to Cumbrian 19th century Romantic poet William Wordsworth, "beyond dispute the most notable relic that this or probably any other country contains". Being a local, he might have been biased, but Long Meg and Her Daughters certainly is a unique spectacle to behold. The stones got their name from a local legend that claims that the stones are not rocks at all, but a petrified coven of witches led by Meg of Meldon, who were turned to stone after violating the Sabbath and dancing wild on the moor.

With a diameter of 350 feet, Long Meg and Her Daughters is the third widest stone circle in the country. Consisting of over 60 stones, its tallest monolith, affectionately known as Long Meg, stands just outside the circle at 12 feet high and is made of local red sandstone, while her 'daughters' – the shorter stones that form the circle – are made from rhyolite. Long Meg is carved with symbols, including a cup, rings and spirals similar to megalithic carvings found at Newgrange, and she is thought to be a solstice stone like the altar stone at Stonehenge, while her daughters may be linked to not only solar but lunar cycles too.

Whatever the origin or original purpose of Long Meg and Her Daughters, they have held us under their spell for centuries, and will likely continue to do so for many more years to come.

TIPS

Hike from Wayland's Smithy along the ancient Ridgeway to Uffington 'Castle' – an Iron Age hill fort on of White Horse Hill, which features the oldest chalk-cut hill figure in Britain – and Dragon Hill, associated with St George

WAYLAND'S SMITHY

Location: Ashbury, Oxfordshire, England

This early Neolithic unique chambered long barrow dates back over 5,000 years. Initially a timber structure, later expanded into a stone burial chamber, it was the Saxons who termed it Wayland's Smithy some 4,000 years after its construction. Associated with the Germanic smith god, Wayland or Wolund, according to folklore, if your horse's shoe broke or went missing while travelling, you could leave your horse and some money at the site and upon returning, the money would have gone and your horse would be fitted with a brand new shoe. Coins have been left at the site since at least the 1960s, which are removed and donated to local charities. Modern Pagans have used Wayland's Smithy as a ritual site since the late 1900s thanks to its links to the Norse god and its role as a prehistoric burial ground and it can be visited all year round.

CASTLERIGG STONE CIRCLE

Location: Keswick, Lake District, Cumbria, England

One of Britain's oldest open stone circles, Castlerigg was constructed in around 3000 BCE and its location alone makes it a mysterious and magical site. Surrounded by the stunning scenery of the Lake District, cradled by mountains and overlooking the Thirlmere Valley, its entrance is marked by two large upright menhirs on its northern side that seem to line up with the midwinter solstice. With its 30 meter diameter circle of 38 (originally 42) stones, curiously, is a rectangular formation of standing stones. This anomaly has only ever been found at one other site – the Bronze Age open stone circle at the Cockpit in nearby Ullswater. In 1901, three Neolithic stone axes were discovered within the circle, now on display in Keswick Museum. But there has never been extensive excavation at Castlerigg, so its purpose remains a mystery. According to folklore, the stones are petrified men and a number of earth – or ghost – lights have been spotted within the circle. If you want to discover its secret yourself, there's a picturesque circular walking route from Keswick town centre that will take you around two hours to hike.

HADRIAN'S WALL

Location: Northumberland/Cumbria/Tyne and Wear, England

This fortification, erected by the Romans in around 122 CE to keep the Scottish Picts from invading their province, once spanned across the north of England from coast to coast, beginning in Wallsend in the east and ending in Bowness-on-Solway in the west. Once towering up to 20 feet high, now this ancient boundary lies in ruins, but it remains a threshold of sorts – between the living and the dead.

Along the stretch of wall were gateways known as milecastles at every mile as well as strategically placed auxiliary forts, many of which are paranormal hotspots. Housesteads Roman Fort in Northumbria is reputed to be haunted by the ghosts of some of the legionairies who once occupied it. Decked in distinctive Roman military attire, their apparitions transport witnesses back almost 2000 years, only to vanish when approached. Others report a solitary centurion walking the grounds of the fort as if searching for something and dressed in full armour. At Vindolanda in Bardon Mill, you might encounter the ghost of a Pictish warrior wielding a spear. At Sewingshields, some say you can hear the battle cries of Picts and Romans – particularly in the evenings on anniversaries of significant conflicts. There have also been reports of battery-operated devices rapidly losing power, electrical equipment failing, cameras malfunctioning and unexplained cold spots. Cawfields Milecastle (also known as Milecastle 42) is still said to be particularly paranormally active with numerous sightings of a Roman legionary known as Lucius still patrolling his station. The spectre can be seen 16 feet above the stretch of ruins between Milecastle 42 and 43 and is rumoured to have killed himself when he discovered the local woman he fell in love with was using him to discover the secrets of the Empire, thus dooming him to eternal penance for his betrayal.

Today, Hadrian's Wall is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and while most of it is no longer standing, Hadrian's Wall Path mostly follows alongside the ruins and the 84 mile route can be hiked on foot – with a few overnight stops along the way.

ELVA PLAIN STONE CIRCLE

Location: Cockermouth, Cumbria, England

Upon the slopes of Elva Hill, thought to have been derived from an old Viking name meaning place of the elves, is an almost perfect 40 metre diameter circle of 15 stones. Once thought to have been made up of 30 menhirs, Stone Age tools and flints have been found within the circle, once believed to be 'elf arrows' forged by the fairies whose mystical world can be reached upon the summit of the hill, and were used as powerful magical charms.

CALANAIS STANDING STONES

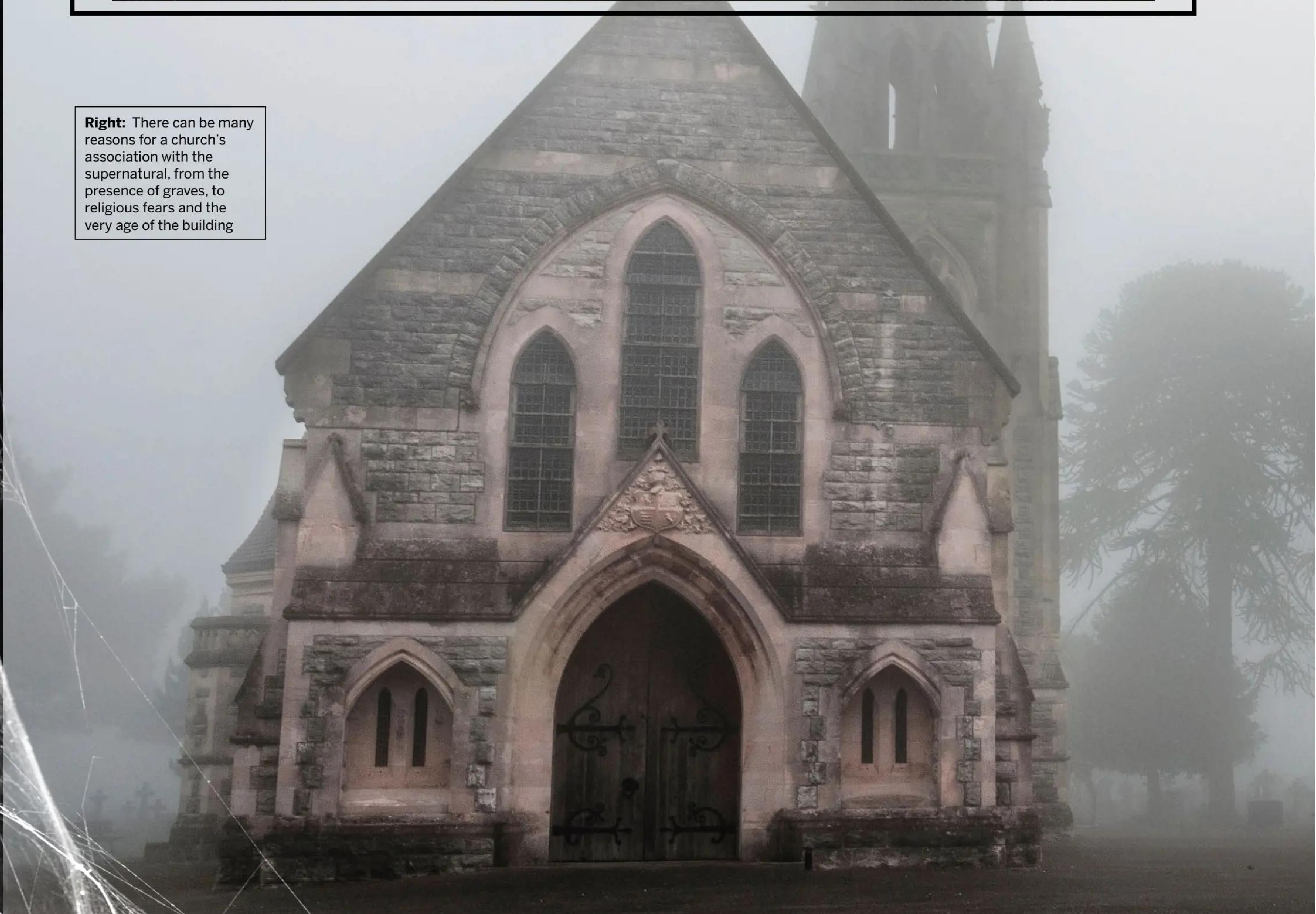
Location: Isle of Lewis, Outer Hebrides, Scotland

Once believed to be the remains of men who were turned to stone as punishment for their transgressions, this arrangement of one irregular central stone circle (within which lies a chambered tomb, built a thousand years after the rest of the monument) and rows of standing stones forms a cross-like shape, but predates Christianity by a few thousand years. It's a relatively small monolithic monument, but supernaturally potent. Known in Gaelic as Fir Bhreig, meaning "False Men", another origin myth is that the stones were once a race of giants who were petrified when they wouldn't convert to Christianity. According to legend, an entity known as the "Shining One" walks the avenue of stones at sunrise every summer solstice, and his coming is marked by the cry of the cuckoo. Many believe he is the Celtic sun-god Lugh, while others believe he's a long lost symbol of fertility replaying his yearly ritual.

Image source: Getty

CURSED CHAPELS AND CREEPY CHURCHES

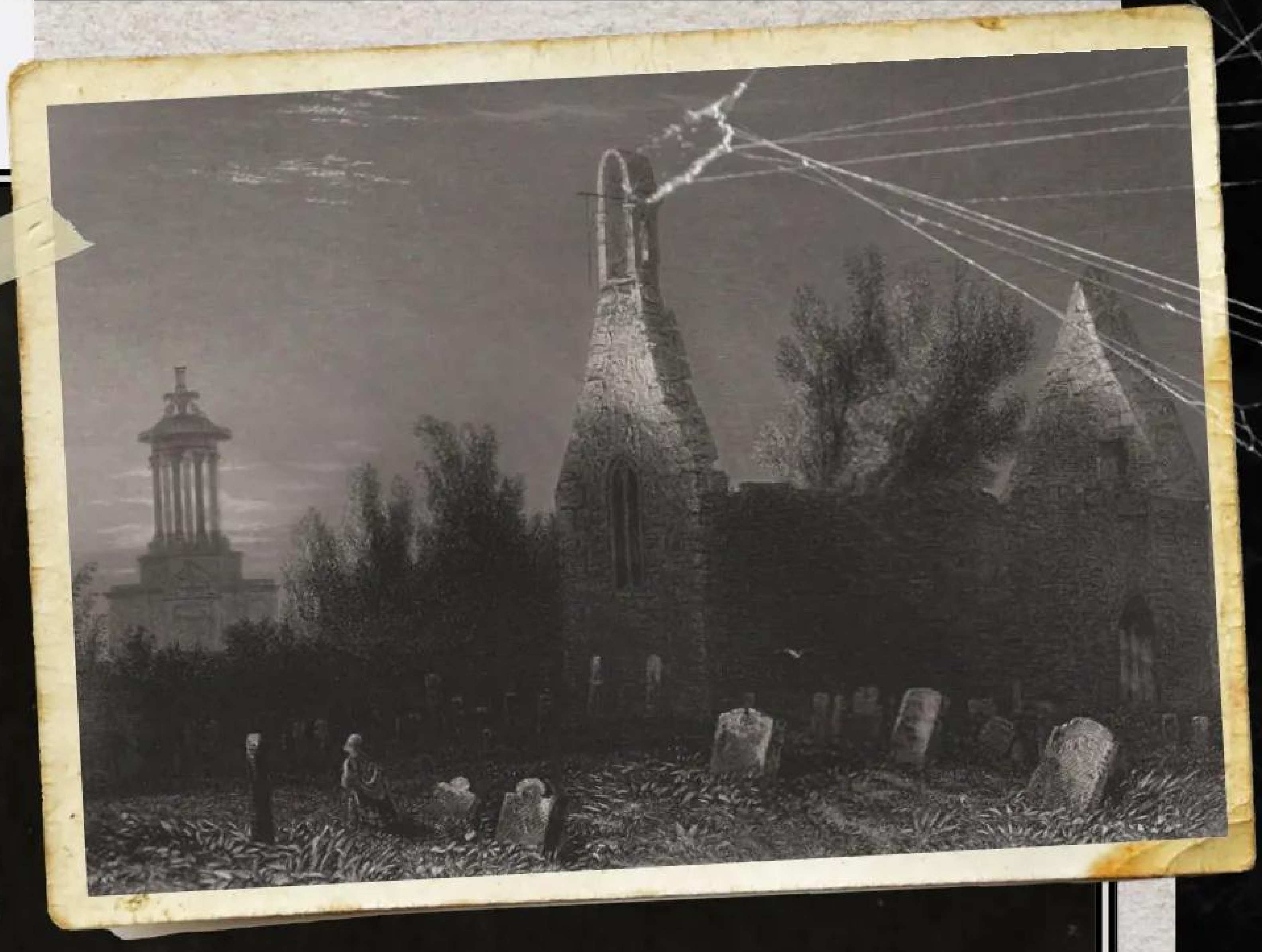
From Gothic cathedrals to crumbling chapels, ecclesiastical architecture has long been associated with ghost stories and tales of supernatural happenings between the pews



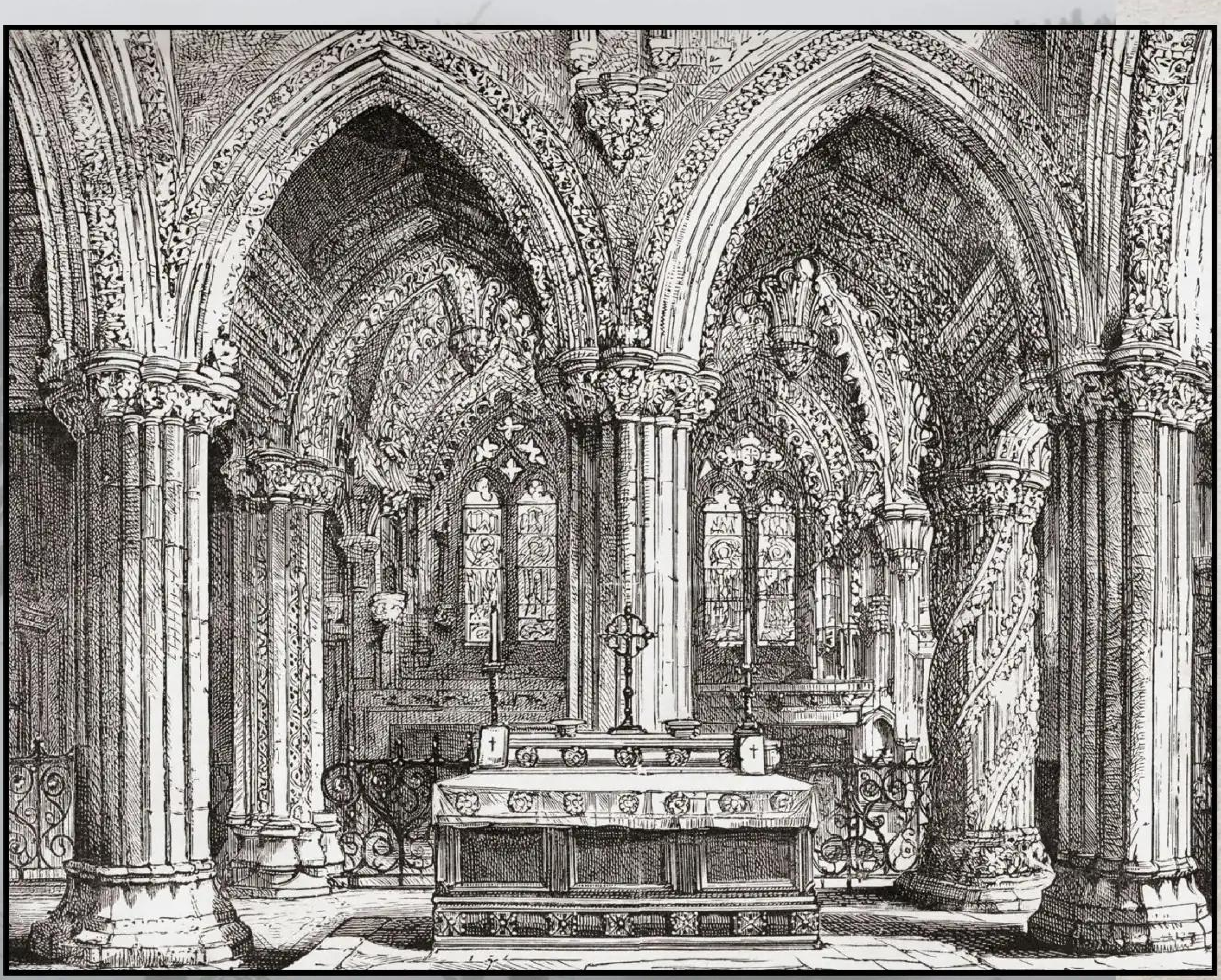
Right: There can be many reasons for a church's association with the supernatural, from the presence of graves, to religious fears and the very age of the building

AULD KIRK

Location: Alloway, South Ayrshire, Scotland



Arguably one is Scotland's most famous churches, Alloway's 16th century Auld Kirk was immortalised in the literary canon by Robert Burns, who set his haunting poem 'Tam o' Shanter' within the church's grounds. Burns's poem tells of Tam, a local farmer, who travelled to Ayr to sell his produce. After every trip, he would spend the money in the pub, with little thought to his family back home. His wife warned him of his thoughtless ways, telling Tam that his drunkenness would be his downfall – a warning that was promptly dismissed. One night when drunkenly riding home, he passed the Auld Kirk and saw the ruin filled with light and life. Peering closer, he realised the building was inhabited by witches, joined by the Devil in dog form, conducting a bloody ritual and dancing to the sound of bagpipes. The Kirk's walls were lined with coffins, with their inhabitants on display, holding candles in their dead hands. While most of the witches were old, one was young and beautiful, and Tam just couldn't control himself. Yelling his admirations out loud, the witches suddenly set upon him, causing him and his horse to race away, attempting to outrun the witches by crossing the river (as witches were thought to be unable to cross running water). They made the dramatic leap to safety and lived to tell the tale to Tam's exhausted wife. Unsurprisingly, and partially thanks to Burns's work, the Auld Kirk has enjoyed a long association with supernatural happenings and witchcraft.



"The chapel is full of strange carvings, often described as a 'Tapestry in Stone'"

ROSSLYN CHAPEL

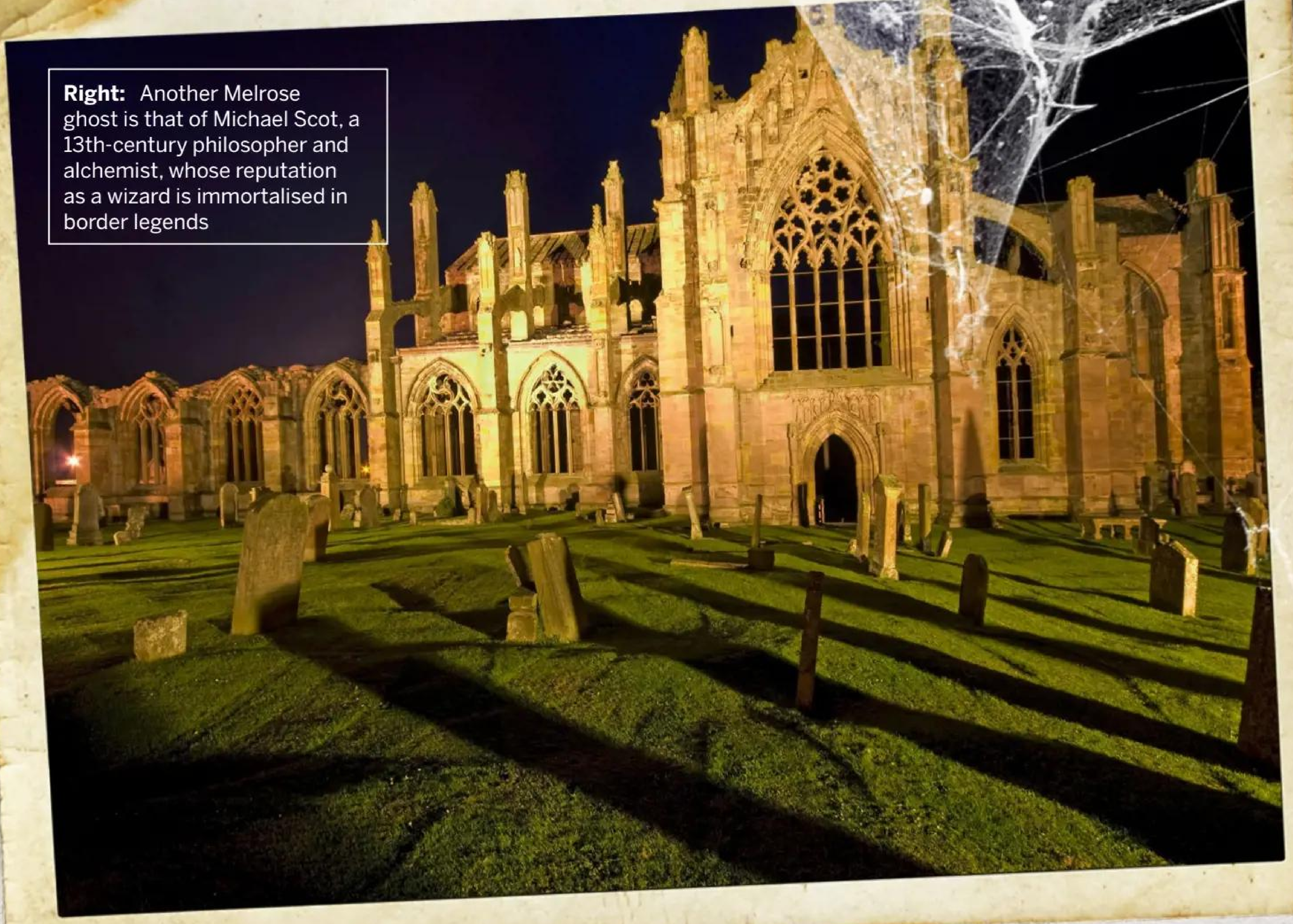
Location: Midlothian, Scotland

This stone chapel dates back to the 15th century, and was featured prominently in the 2003 novel and subsequent 2006 film, *The Da Vinci Code*. Initially built as a private chapel in 1446 by the last Earl of Orkney, Sir William St Clair, he commissioned numerous stone masons to construct it with various imported materials from far and wide. Unfortunately, Sir William died before his vision was finished and he was laid to rest within its walls. The chapel is full of strange carvings, often described as a 'Tapestry in Stone'. One pillar in particular, The Apprentice Pillar, is said to have been carved by an apprentice stonemason whose talent superseded that of his master, causing his master to murder him in a fit of jealousy. The meanings behind many of the carvings appear to be Masonic, which is unsurprising as it is likely that Sir William was indeed involved in or at least inspired by the Order of the Knights Templar, despite the fact that they were officially disbanded in 1312. Today, the chapel is said to be home to numerous ghosts, including that of the alleged murdered apprentice, a ghostly dog, numerous monks and even a few knights.

Image source: Alamy, Getty

MELROSE ABBEY

Location: Roxburghshire, Scotland



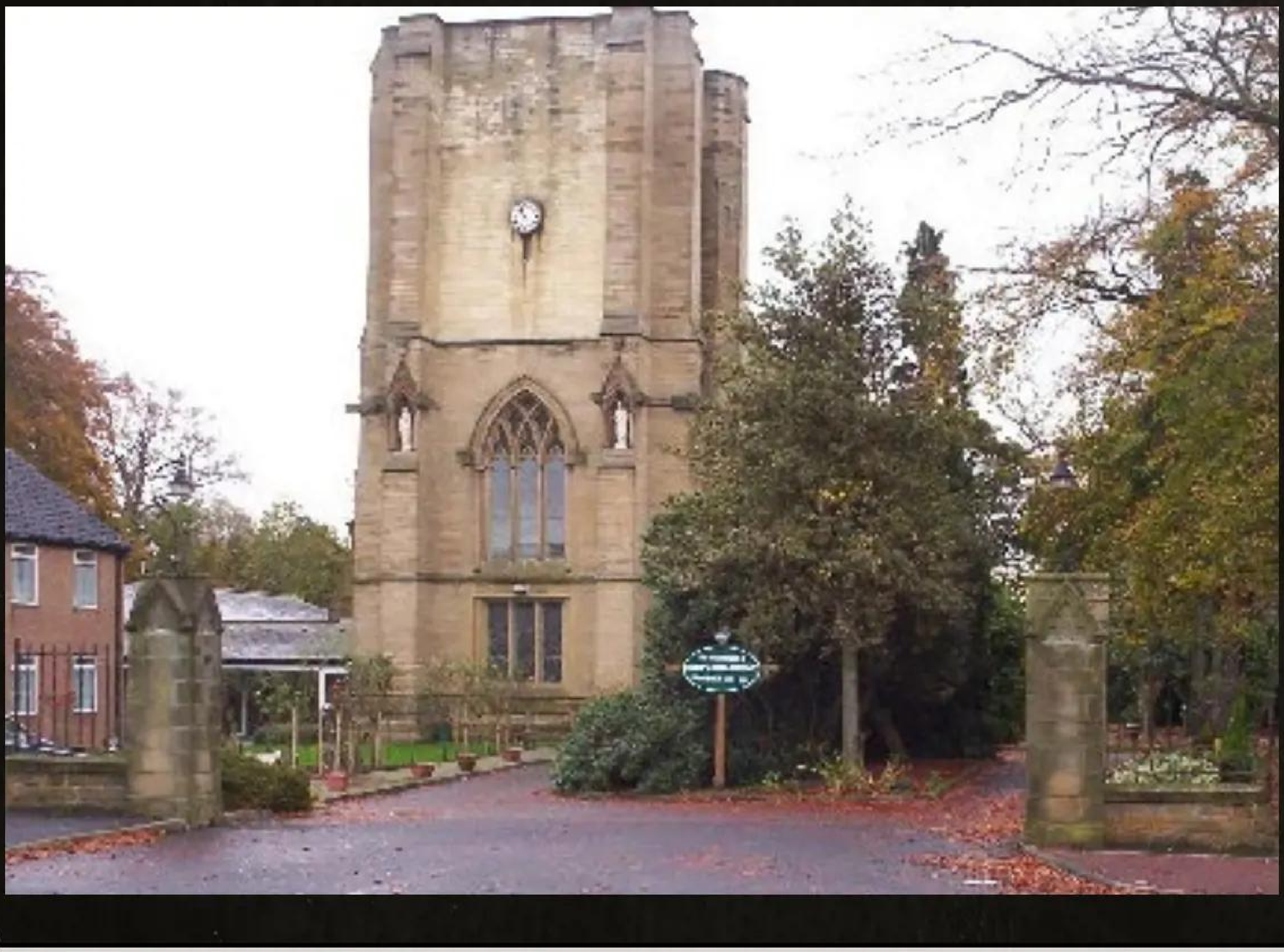
Right: Another Melrose ghost is that of Michael Scot, a 13th-century philosopher and alchemist, whose reputation as a wizard is immortalised in border legends

Once a wealthy and prosperous monastery, Melrose Abbey is home to one of the creepiest vampire legends, certainly in Scotland. In 1139, there was a chaplain to one of the ladies who lived nearby. This chaplain was known to revel in a wide array of sins and vices, even earning himself the nickname 'Hunderprest', meaning 'dog priest'. He was given this title apparently due to his fondness for hunting with a pack of wild hounds. It is believed that when the priest died, he paid for his sinful life by being cursed to return as a revenant, or vampire. There were sightings of the priest stalking the streets, searching for blood and terrifying the locals. It was said he would return to the abbey in the dead of night in the form of a bat. The monks at the abbey were reportedly able to drive the vampire away with prayers and rituals; however, this simply drove the priest into the house of his old mistress, who he bothered for sex. Terrified, she called upon the help of the monks, hoping that an exorcism would help.

In order to finally rid themselves of this sinful demon once and for all, an elder monk travelled to the priest's grave, where he reportedly witnessed the man rise out of the ground and approach him. The monk fought him off with a staff, and drove the phantom back into the ground. Now confident he was dealing with a vampire, the monk and some companions opened up the grave the following morning. Inside they found the priest's body, a smile upon his lips, dripping with blood. The monks removed the body, burned it to ashes, and scattered the ashes into the wind. The monks were satisfied that the demon was dealt with and things began to calm down. However, today it is said that on some nights ghostly howls can still be heard throughout the ruins of the abbey.

THE CHURCH OF THE SACRED HEART

Location: Boho, Fermanagh, Northern Ireland



The Catholic Church in Boho, Fermanagh, is an unsuspecting little building in a archeologically rich area, on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. While folk remedies and Catholicism aren't commonly happy bedfellows, the grave of a long-dead priest has brought the Church of the Sacred Heart to the attention of many folklorists. Reverend James McGirr was parish priest in 1803 and was known as something of a healer in his own right. Prior to his death, he claimed that soil from his grave would provide healing powers and should be used by the community. This folk remedy proved very popular locally for well over a century, with the dirt being returned to the priest's grave after use. In 2018, tests of the gravesite revealed that it indeed possessed a microorganism that can assist in curing antibiotic-resistant infections.

Image source: Alamy, Getty, Wiki

DUNGIVEN PRIORY

Location: Dungiven, Londonderry, Northern Ireland

The history of Dungiven Priory is intertwined with that of the O'Cahan family, who made the priory grounds their resting place for many generations. However, the tale of Finvola O'Cahan is the most enduring of all. A cheerful and beautiful girl, she was known locally as 'the Gem of the Roe', and did not expect to fall hopelessly in love with a visiting Scot, Angus McDonald. Her family agreed to the marriage on the condition that she be returned home if she ever fell ill. Sadly, shortly after marrying, Finvola became gravely ill, and despite his promise, Angus did not alert her family. In Dungiven, the wail of the Banshee – named Grainne Rua – alerted the O'Cahans of a death in the clan. Heartbroken and furious, Finvola's brothers disinterred her body and brought her home, laying her to rest in Dungiven. However, some claim that the Banshee's cries can still be heard, mourning Finvola.

Above: One variation of the tale says de Gretham was falsely accused of witchcraft after falling in love with the daughter of Sir William Wellen

THORNTON ABBEY

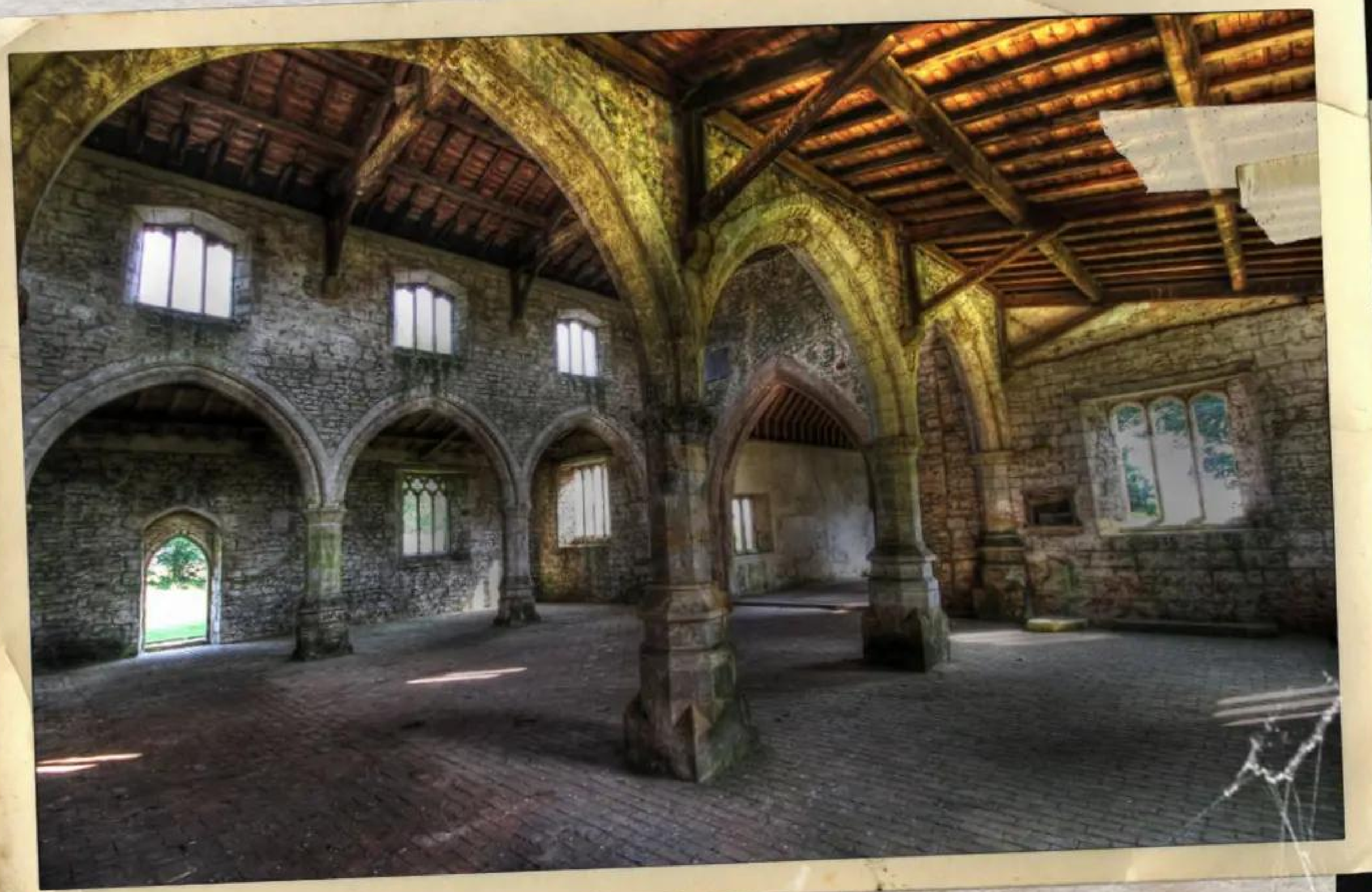
Location: North Lincolnshire, England

Thornton Abbey is a beautiful and imposing ruin, sitting as a reminder of its once-grand splendour. However, for all of its rich history, its legends remain an eternal draw to tourists and ghost hunters alike. According to a report by 18th-century antiquarian, William Stukeley, the curious skeletal remains of a murdered abbot were unearthed in 1722, posed in the most remarkable manner. Discovered in a dungeon, his remains were found sitting at a table, with a book, pen, ink and candlestick laid out before him. According to legend, the skeleton belonged to Thomas de Gretham, a 14th-century religious official with a not-so-secret love of occultism, the dark arts and earthly vice. It is said that his secret interests were suddenly uncovered and as punishment, he was bricked up beneath the abbey and left to starve. A shadowy figure believed to be de Gretham has been sighted throughout the abbey for centuries.

ST BOTOLPH'S CHURCH

Location: Skidbrooke, Lincolnshire, England

Also known as 'The Demon Church', St Botolph's is now a defunct church. Since closing for worship in 1973, St Botolph's legacy quickly changed from one of love and light to that of black magic and evil. Reports of animal sacrifice and satanic worship were commonplace, with the charred remains of pseudo-spooky rituals frequently found where the altar once stood. Many paranormal investigators cut their teeth at St Botolph's, reporting a whole host of supernatural happenings, including mysterious lights and voices. In addition to this, the spirits of children and monks have been seen between the gravestones. St Botolph's was built upon the foundations of a former abbey, giving some credence to the claims of monks, however there is little historical grounding for any demonic traditions. It could be argued that dark rituals leave dark imprints, and while the physical future of St Botolph's hangs in the balance, its sinister legacy may outlive us all.



THE BEST LAID PLANS...

Each church will have its own opening times and keyholders, so be sure to plan your trips well in advance and contact the local parish if you're unsure about access. There's no greater disappointment than driving for ages, only to find yourself locked out, standing disappointed in the graveyard.

Above: Most churches are also maintained by donations alone, so remember to pack a little cash as thanks!

Below: Another legend says that Drake's deals with the Devil were multitudinous, and that they had a deal to ensure the defeat of the Spanish Armada

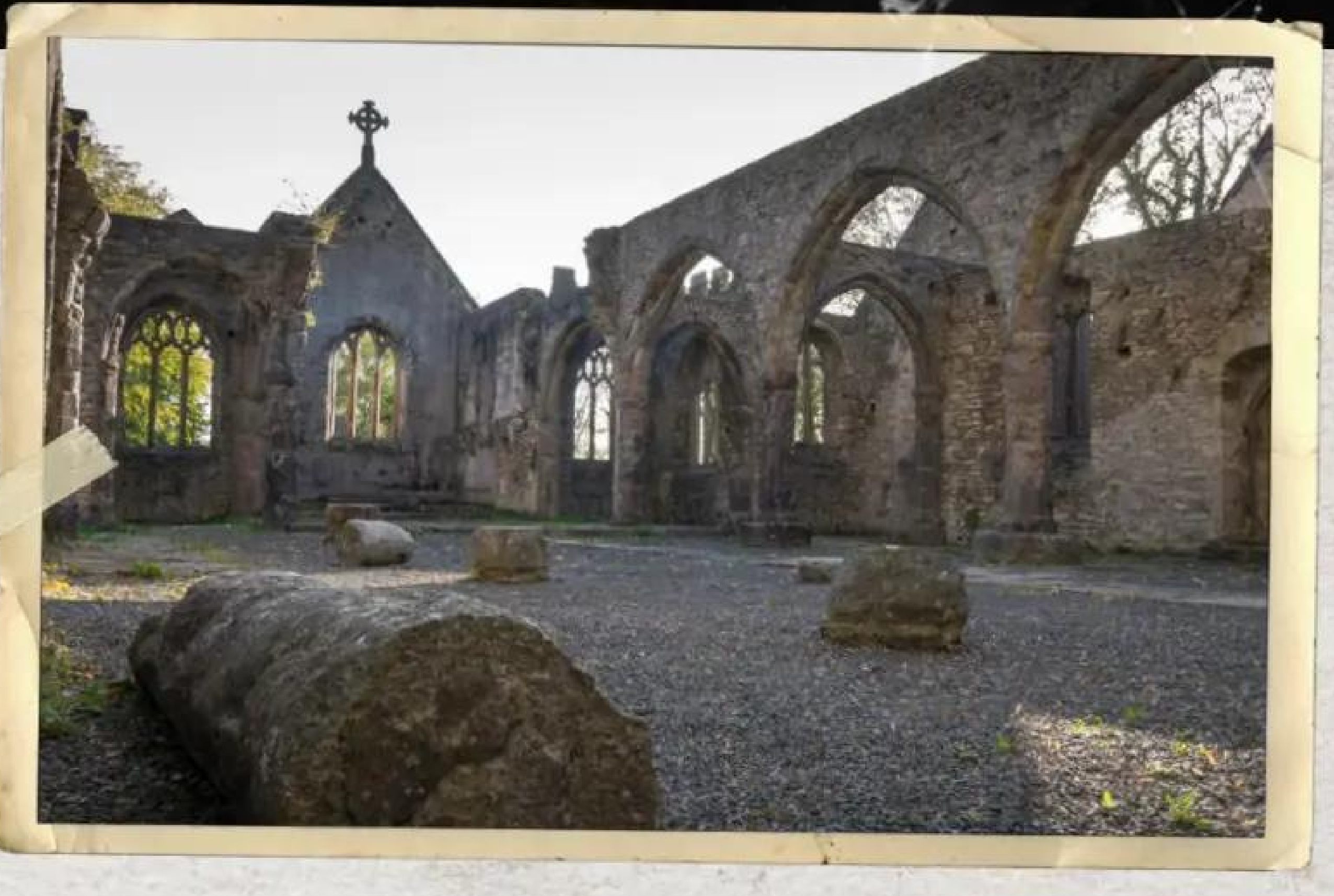
BUCKLAND ABBEY

Location: Yelverton, Devon, England

Once owned by Sir Francis Drake, Buckland Abbey boasts an unexpectedly demonic tale of revival. Following the purchase of the ruined abbey by Drake in 1582, a local legend tells of the renovations lasting a mere three days, all thanks to the assistance of the Devil himself. Drake was said to have made a pact with the Devil, in that Drake would become the Devil's eternal servant, if only he would rebuild the abbey at great speed. Drake's eternal condemnation was to drive a hearse across Dartmoor at night, his carriage led by four headless horses. The whole ghoulish affair is lit by moonlight and pursued by a fearsome pack of snarling, black hellhounds, as they make their way across the moors, hunting out the souls of unbaptised children. Drake's spirit is said to still linger within the abbey, with his dying wish being for his drum to be returned and displayed at Buckland. This old drum is said to beat loudly whenever England is in danger, having been heard by family and staff alike at the outbreak of several wars since Drake's death in 1596.

Image source: Alamy, Getty, Wiki

BUCKFASTLEIGH CHURCH AND GRAVEYARD



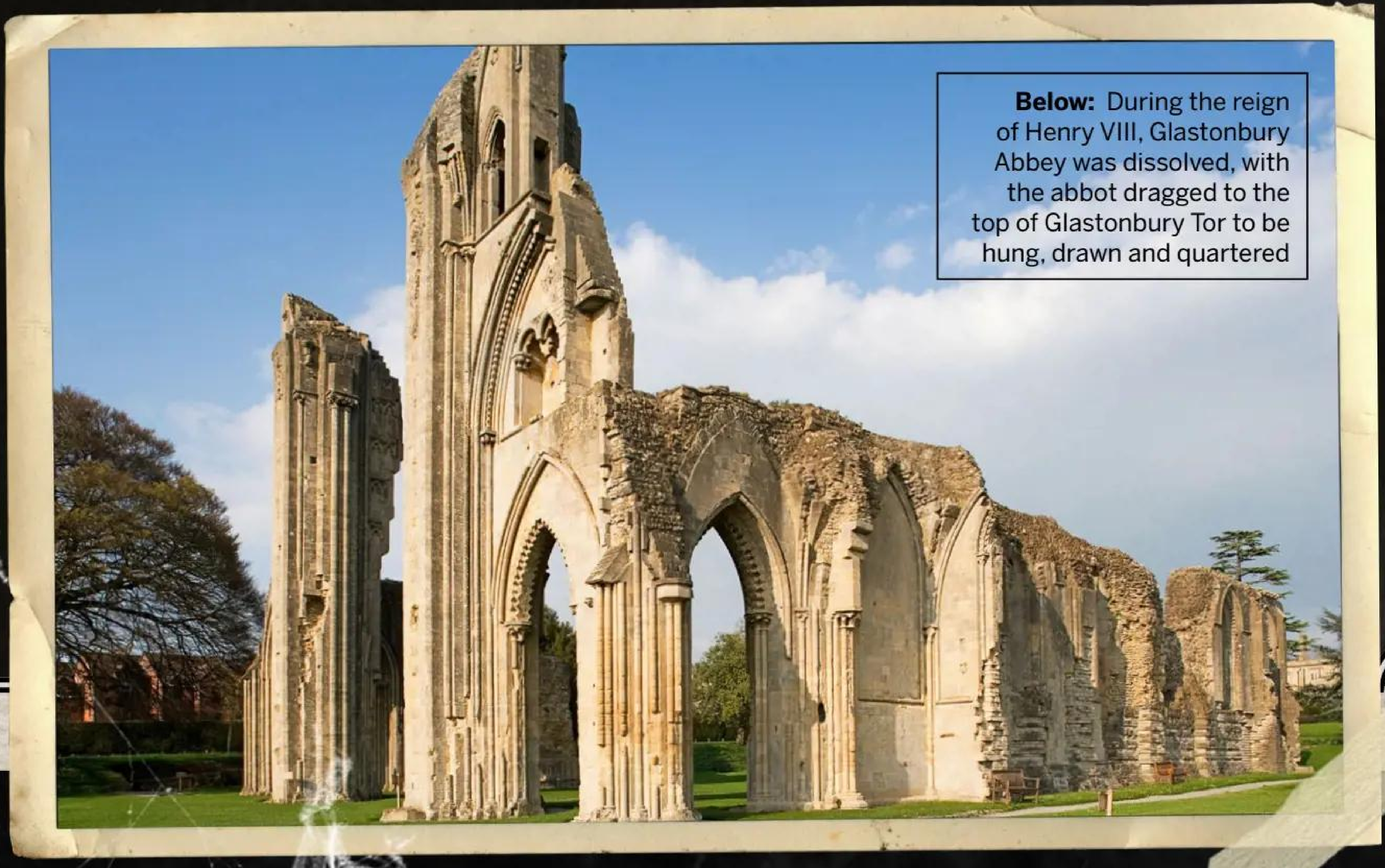
Location: Buckfastleigh, Devon, England

The skeletal remains of Buckfastleigh church perch on a rock opposite Buckfast Abbey (itself haunted by a procession of phantom monks) and have attracted a congregation of corvids and a midnight mass of owls since a fire, supposedly started by Satanists, decimated the interior and ancient Norman front back in 1992. The church's history is chequered with disasters, from fires to lightning strikes, bombs and body snatchers. If that's not ominous enough, its long-forgotten churchyard is home to one of England's oldest mausoleums: Richard Cabell's sepulchre, a tomb harbouring the remains of an evil 17th-century squire whose infamy inspired the Sherlock Holmes tale, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Cabell was said to have murdered his wife and sold his soul to the Devil. His death in 1677 was predicted by a pack of hellhounds, who arose from the depths of Dartmoor to escort his soul to hell. Convinced that they would never be safe from him, the Buckfast locals constructed a solid tomb and secured his coffin beneath a solid block of heavy stone to trap him for eternity. Despite this, his spirit is said to haunt the graveyard along with the hellish hounds. Today, you'd be forgiven for mistaking the sepulchre's pyramid-shaped porch for a closed café kiosk – but most kiosks don't harbour a devil that bites your fingers if you circle them seven times and stick your hands through their iron bars...

GLASTONBURY ABBEY

Location: Glastonbury, Somerset, England

Glastonbury is beloved by witches, fairies, magic and spiritual people of all backgrounds. One of the most prominent legends is that Christ himself visited Glastonbury, with Joseph of Arimathea later returning to bury the Holy Grail in a secret place by the Tor, at the entrance to the underworld. Joseph was also believed to have built a rudimentary church on the site now occupied by Glastonbury Abbey. Arthurian legends are also intertwined with the site, with King Arthur's grave believed to be on the grounds, buried within a hollowed-out oak tree. In 1907, archaeologist Frederick Bligh Bond was employed to excavate the abbey ruins, which he did, uncovering several notable finds including two other chapels. Years later, he confessed to have been guided across the site by the spirits of deceased monks, who spoke through a close medium friend of his.



Below: During the reign of Henry VIII, Glastonbury Abbey was dissolved, with the abbot dragged to the top of Glastonbury Tor to be hung, drawn and quartered

KNOWLTON CHURCH AND RINGS

Location: Knowlton, Wimborne, Dorset, England

Knowlton Church is a unique and mysterious Norman structure, set in the centre of an enormous former Neolithic henge. This powerful site can be read as a representation of the country's transition from Pagan to Christian worship, with the recognisable church building surrounded by a vast, ancient ritual site – the stones having been broken up to build the church itself. Antiquarian William Stukeley visited Knowlton in the 18th century and was told by locals that there had once been six other churches nearby, all of which had suddenly disappeared, owing to the power of the Neolithic ring. This ancient landscape has understandably given way to countless supernatural tales and rumours of hauntings, such as the alleged sighting of a ghostly man on horseback who runs across the area at night, galloping through the church as though it didn't exist. A weeping woman, a wandering nun and a spectral face peering from the top of the church have all been reported as being eternal residents.

BINHAM PRIORY

Location: Binham, Fakenham, Norfolk, England

Founded by Peter de Valognes, the nephew of William the Conqueror, in 1091, Binham Priory has its fair share of mysterious histories, scandals and legends. In the 14th century, the abbey's prior William de Somerton sold off some of the priory's lands and treasures in order to fund his (unsuccessful) experiments into alchemy. Unsurprisingly, shortly thereafter, Somerton and 13 of his monks were arrested. In more recent centuries, these monks are said to still linger within the priory walls. A Benedictine monk has been seen wandering throughout the priory, appearing and disappearing at impossible heights, frequently seen waiting on a ledge by the church door. He is also seen pacing the route of a tunnel linking the priory with the nearby shrine at Walsingham. A less ecclesiastical spirit is Jimmy Griggs the fiddler, who supposedly followed the monk into the tunnel, playing his fiddle throughout. That was until a sudden tunnel collapse sealed his fate.

Below: The haunting sound of Jimmy Griggs' fiddle has been heard echoing around the empty priory as his spirit spends eternity beneath the ground

NEWSTEAD ABBEY

Location: Ravenshead, Nottinghamshire, England

Lord Byron's old haunt is home to a few phantoms, one of which he reportedly witnessed for himself. Known as the Black Friar, but dubbed by Byron as the Goblin Friar, this black, shapeless mass was said to roll off the bed, onto the floor and vanish. Byron claimed it would appear to his family members as an indication of an unfortunate event. When Byron tired of life at the abbey, he sold it to his childhood friend, Thomas Wildman. Wildman heard that a local deaf and mute girl named Sophie Hyatt was a huge fan of the poet, and invited her to visit Newstead as often as she wished. Sophie found a haven there, caring for a dog Byron had left behind and becoming a familiar sight, dressed in her white gown. Sophie had relied on a rich relative for her income and, after he died, set off for Nottingham, leaving a note to tell the Wildmans of her plans. When they read it, the family decided to ask Sophie to live with them at Newstead and sent a servant to bring her home. Tragically, he arrived to find that Sophie had been hit by a drayman's cart and killed instantly. But Sophie's spirit lives on at Newstead, strolling through her beloved garden where she now has her own pathway – White Lady's Walk. The final ghostly figure at Newstead Abbey is an ancestor of Byron's, witnessed by *Sleepy Hollow* author, Washington Irving. He claimed the terrifying bearded figure emerged from a painting above the drawing room fireplace at night.

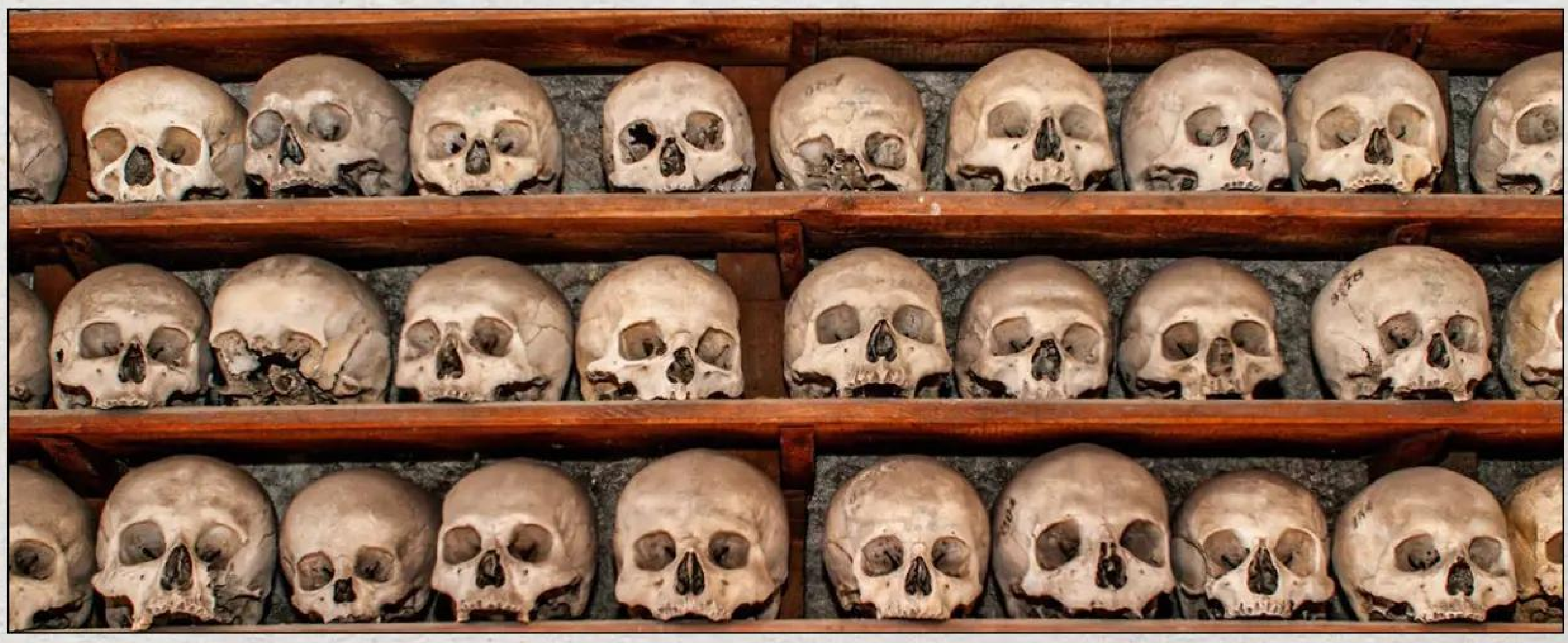
Right: Both visitors and staff at Newstead Abbey have reported the strong smell of roses and lavender, giving name to a 'new' spirit, 'The Rose Lady'

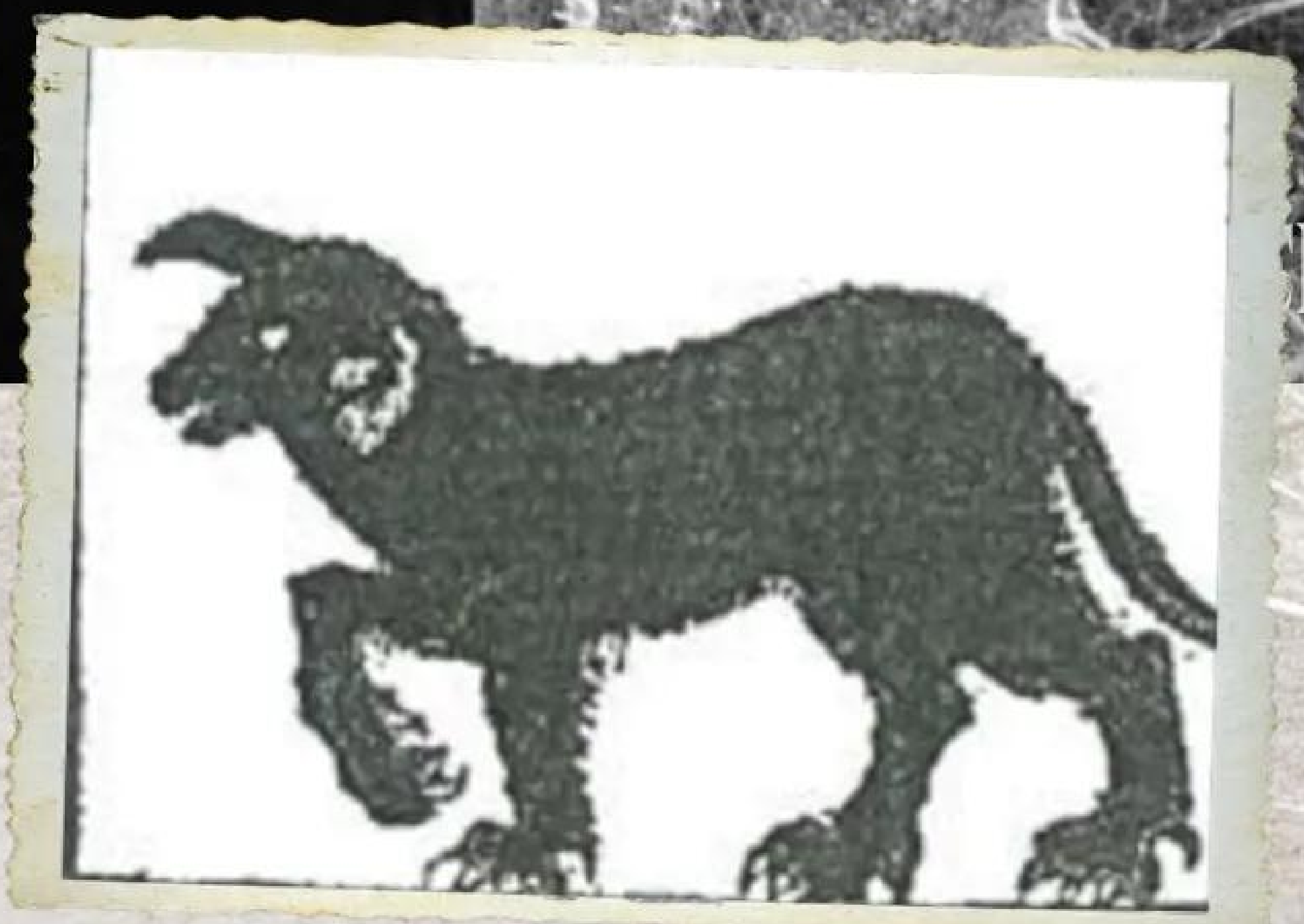
Image source: Alamy, Getty, Wiki

ST LEONARD'S CHURCH

Location: Hythe, Kent, England

While most rural churches boast jumbled churchyards of poignant, moss-covered memorials, the dead at St Leonard's spend eternity stacked high, and in very close quarters. St Leonard's is arguably the largest and best preserved ossuary in the UK, where entire walls are constructed from thousands of femurs, with skulls stacked high, staring through empty sockets. The above-ground ossuary was installed in the 13th century and holds approximately 2,000 skulls and 8,000 femurs, most of which are believed to be medieval. St Leonard's stands as a staggering example of 'Memento Mori' – a reminder to us all that death is inevitable. Despite the mountains of bones on site, St Leonard's ghosts are said to be five men who were imprisoned in the church and left to die following an attempt to steal valuables. People have reported seeing the faces of these unfortunate men at the parvise window, despite there being no historical evidence of this incident.





ST MARY'S CHURCH

Location: Bungay, Suffolk, England.

St Mary's is an unassuming redundant Anglican church with a strong link to the country's most infamous hellhound. On 4 August 1577, parishioners sat in church while a violent storm raged outside. Suddenly, an enormous black dog with glowing red eyes burst through the church doors – Black Shuck had made his first appearance. Described as having eyes like saucers and being the size of a calf, or even a horse in some instances, the monstrous dog was reported to have appeared on a blanket of mist. It tore through the congregation, killing unfortunate parishioners and causing the collapse of the church steeple, before reappearing at Blythburgh church, where – after killing more worshippers – he was finally trapped, leaving deep, scorched claw marks in the door. While the church no longer has a congregation, there is a lingering folk belief that Black Shuck still haunts Bungay and its environs, appearing as an immortal death omen.

GHOST HUNTS ARE A NO-GO!

While tales of ghosts may inspire you to undertake your own spooky investigations, be mindful that churches are consecrated places of worship and rest. While your future ghost might not mind being disturbed for a quick post-mortem chat, the beliefs and burial traditions of others must be respected above everything. Save your paranormal exploits for elsewhere!

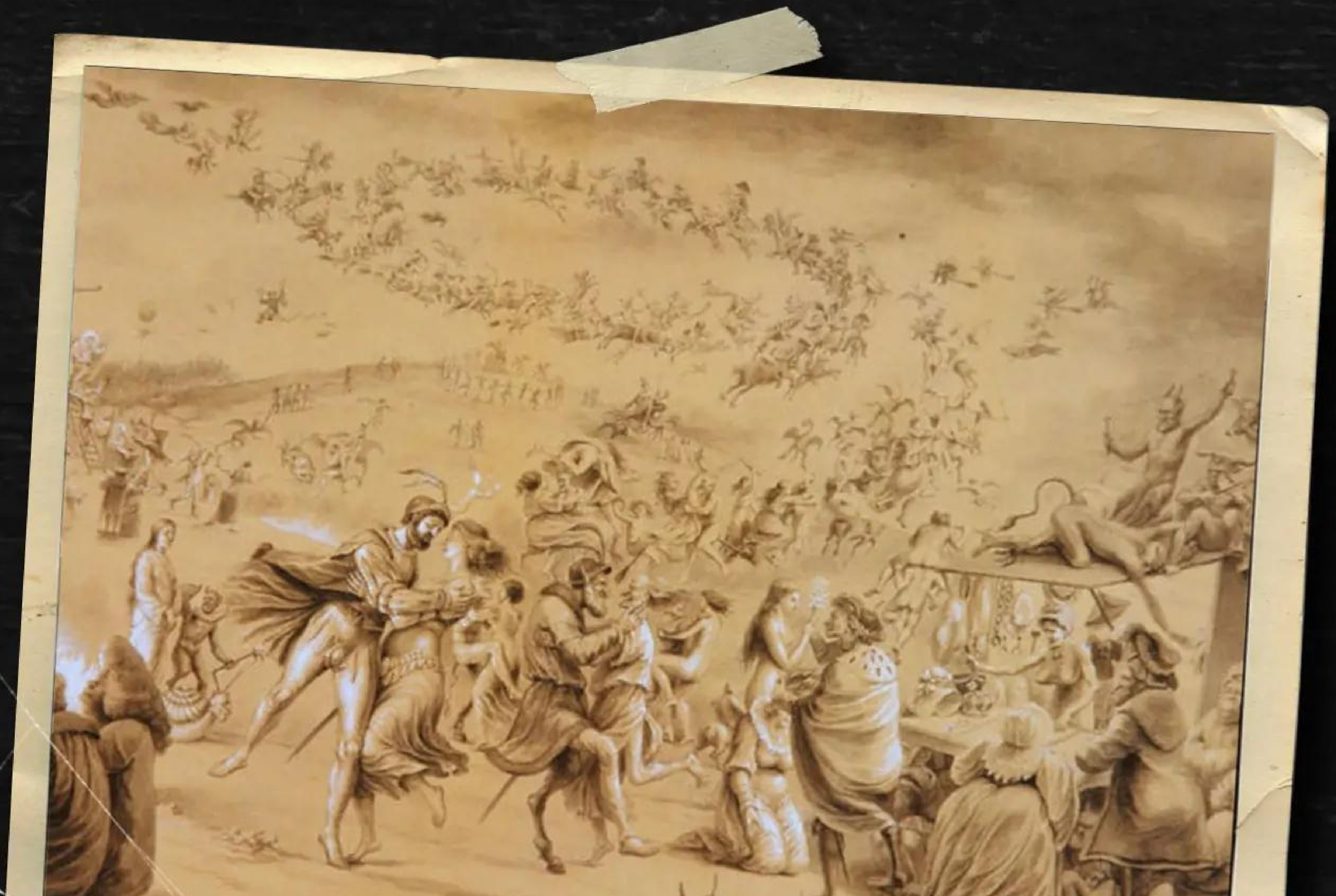
Above: Ghost hunting in burial spaces may not only be unethical but in some cases illegal, too

WAYS OF THE WITCHES

Witchcraft and folk magic have had a significant impact on shaping the British Isles, from fairytales and magical beliefs that enriched the countryside, to the dark days of persecution that have left a heavy shadow over the landscapes

Witchcraft in Britain means a number of things. For many, it describes the unfortunate subjects of various witch trials, ordinary men and (predominantly) women who were accused by their communities of black magic and consorting with the Devil. Some, like the famous group in Pendle, may have genuinely dabbled in what they believed to be the dark arts. Others might have owned a parcel of desirable land or offered a service such as midwifery, dentistry or healing that posed a financial threat to a more well-connected rival, who could mobilise the machinery of early-modern superstition against them in the shape of the local reeve, priest and community. Many were simply just outcasts.

Two British queens were historically accused of witchcraft – Joan of Navarre and Elizabeth Woodville – while another, Elizabeth I, employed a veritable wizard as her advisor in the shape of John Dee. It was Elizabeth's successor, however, that



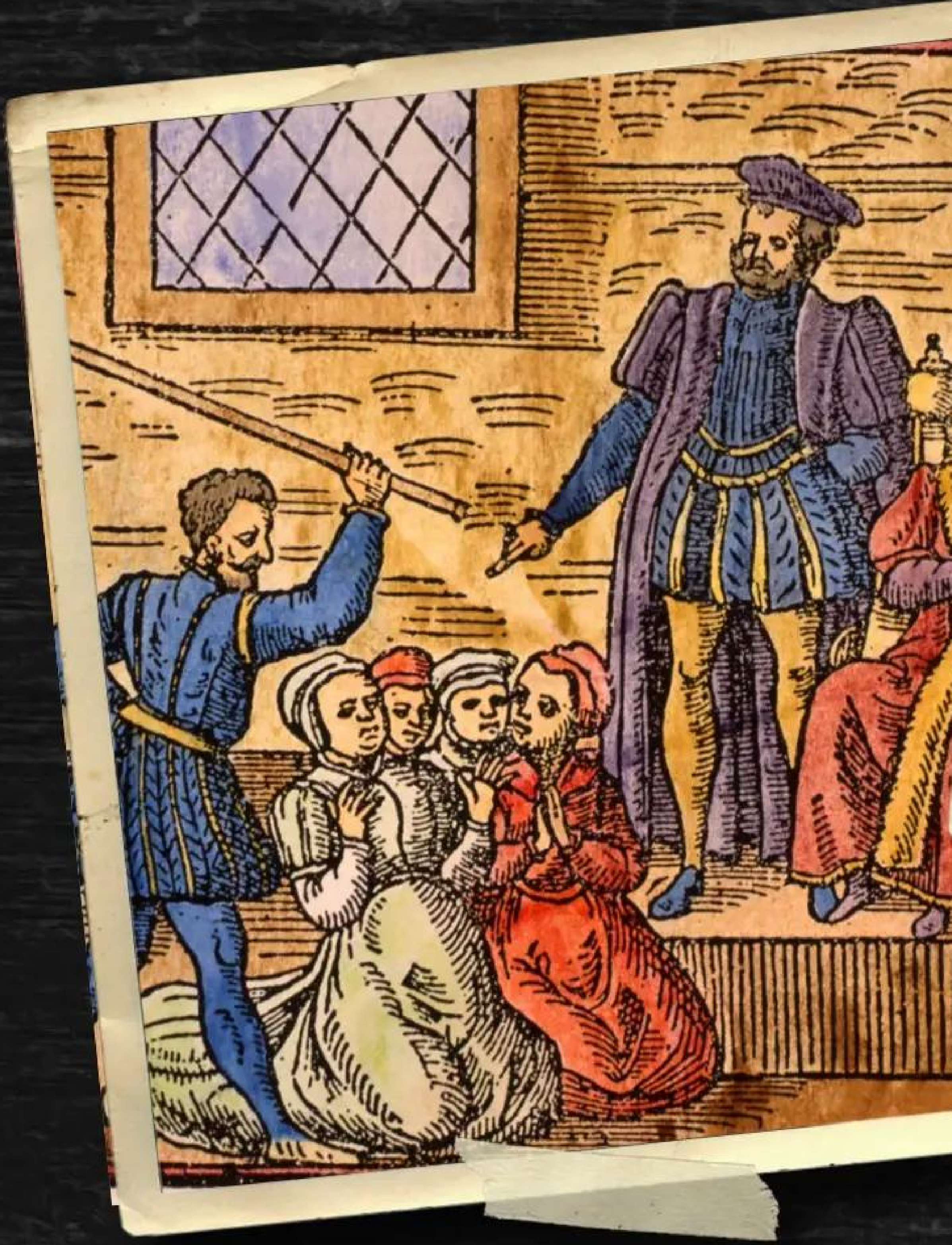
spearheaded the witch trials and panics that shook Britain. King James VI and I (he was the sixth James of Scotland, the first of England) became obsessed with the idea that witches were out to persecute him after his marriage to Anne of Denmark in 1589. The royal couple's ill-fated journeys to meet up with one another (they had been married by proxy) were constantly dogged by storms, which the Danish blamed on witchcraft. This outlandish accusation electrified the King: by 1597 he had published a book, *Daemonologie*, which detailed how to identify and prosecute witches. It was King James that first set down the idea that witches were predominantly women, and who advocated for capital punishment of the suspected sorceresses, quoting the biblical Book of Exodus, which states "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live".

For others, witchcraft in Britain refers to the ancient pagan faiths and practices of the pre-Christian Isles (perhaps more accurately described in a British context as druidry), the folk magic rooted in the medieval era, and the reconstructionist modern Pagan faiths assembled out of these remnants in the 20th century. Two key strands of Wicca were born in Britain: the first and original implementation of the faith, Gardnerian Wicca, created by Gerald Gardner; and the later Alexandrian Wicca founded by Alex and Maxine Sanders. Some other traditions, such as Cochrane's Craft and British Traditional Witchcraft, claim descent from hidden folk practices going back centuries – the latter is rooted in the New Forest covens that Gardner claimed had initiated him into an ancient witch cult in the early 20th century. The Witch Cult Hypothesis, promulgated in the UK by Egyptologist Margaret Murray, theorised that the witch trials of the early modern period were an attempt by the Christian Church to wipe out an ancient Pagan religion that had flourished in Britain since before the coming of the Romans. It theorised that the 'Devil' feared by witch-hunting Christians, was in fact the Horned God of the old rites, demonised and disenfranchised by the Church. While it joined the dots between the two meanings for 'witchcraft' that were understood in the UK, and added the legitimising weight of time and tradition to the romantic new ideas of the Wiccans, the theory has since been questioned by some academics.

Today, witchcraft in the UK is a multifaceted term that is used to describe everything from tourist trails through the sites of famous witch panics, to folk-historical sorceresses and seeresses like Mother Shipton, as well as the wealth of modern Pagan practice. The British Isles are packed with locations in which you can walk in the footsteps of historical and legendary witches, and even visit their dwellings. Here are just some of them.

Left: Witches were believed to cavort in the fields on spring nights, and curse their fellow villagers with strange ailments

Above: Margaret Murray was a British historian who tried to make a link between the witch panics of the 16th and 17th centuries and an ancient Pagan religion



Above: King James was obsessed with witches and became a self-styled expert on identifying, prosecuting and punishing them

Image source: Alamy, Getty, Wiki

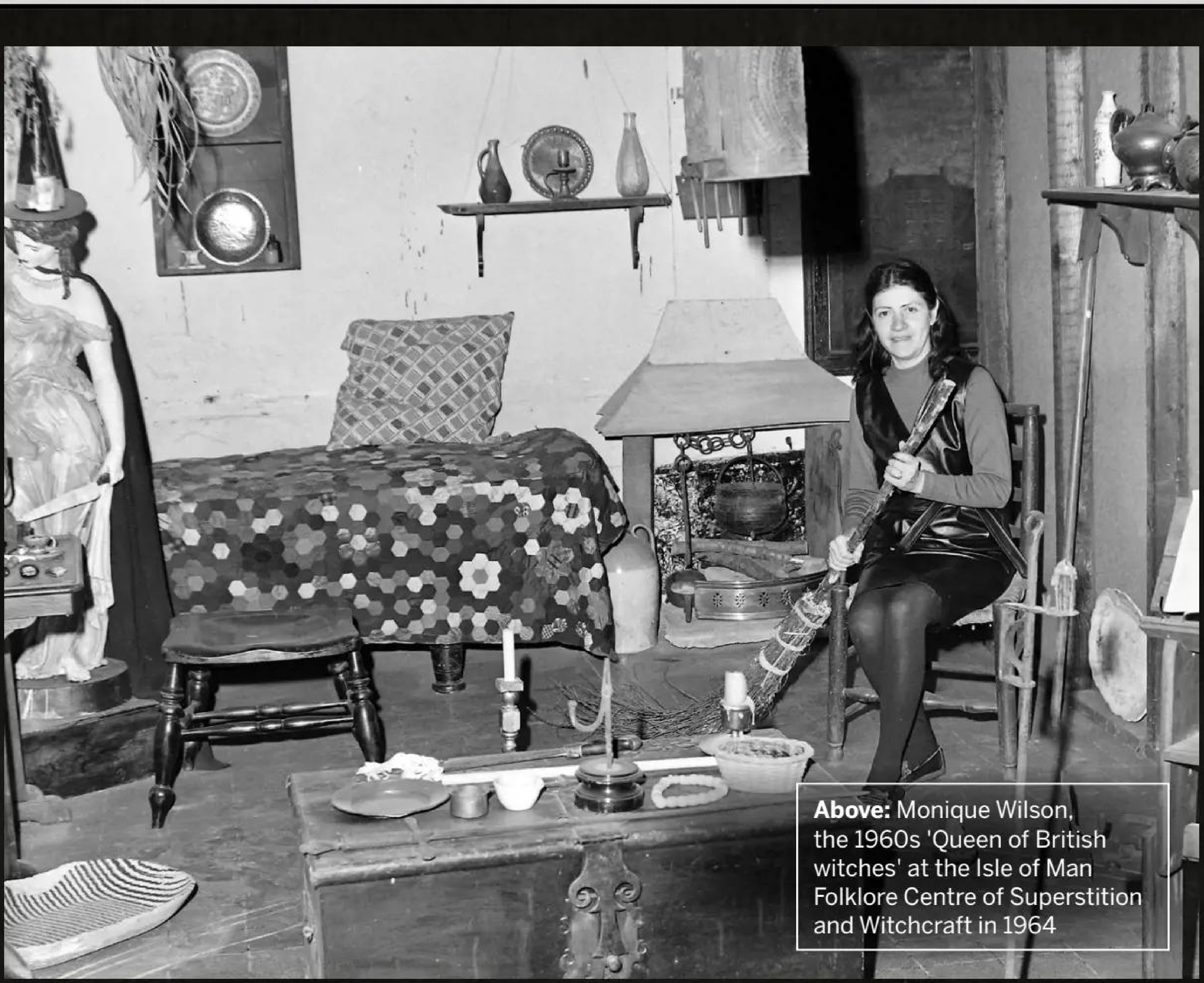
THE ISLE OF MAGIC

Location: Isle of Man, Irish Sea

This British island, off the northwest of the country and surrounded by the fierce Irish Sea, has the dubious distinction of being, in the 17th century, the only place in the Church of England's communion where convicted witches were actually burned alive – most were actually hanged or drowned. In 1617 a mother and her son were burned to death in the square of Castletown, which was then the island's capital. The woman was an accused witch, her little boy was guilty simply by association. The island had caught the witch fever from King James; their proximity to his original Scottish kingdom and the cultural ties between the Scots and the Manx had easily swayed them. Despite this, later records show that the Manx were more tolerant of witches, and by the 20th century, they even embraced them.

In 1666 the island's most famous witch was Elizabeth Kewin, or Cubon, who was attacked by her neighbours and even imprisoned for a short while for her alleged crimes. Elizabeth was believed to be able to curse – or charm – cows, milk, and butter, either producing abundant milk, cream and butter for herself and her clients, or causing cattle deaths, souring milk, and preventing butter churning as she saw fit. Two of her neighbours bailed her out of prison and when she did stand trial, a jury cleared her of causing death by witchcraft but nevertheless felt she was up to something unchristian, and she was made to do public penance for three Sundays with a shaming notice pinned to her dress.

In the 1950s, early Wiccan practitioner Cecil Williamson set up his Folklore Centre of Superstition and Witchcraft on the island. Wicca founder Gerald Gardner was featured as its "resident witch". Gardner took over the centre in 1960 (it closed in 1973), while Williamson went on to found the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic in Boscastle, Cornwall.

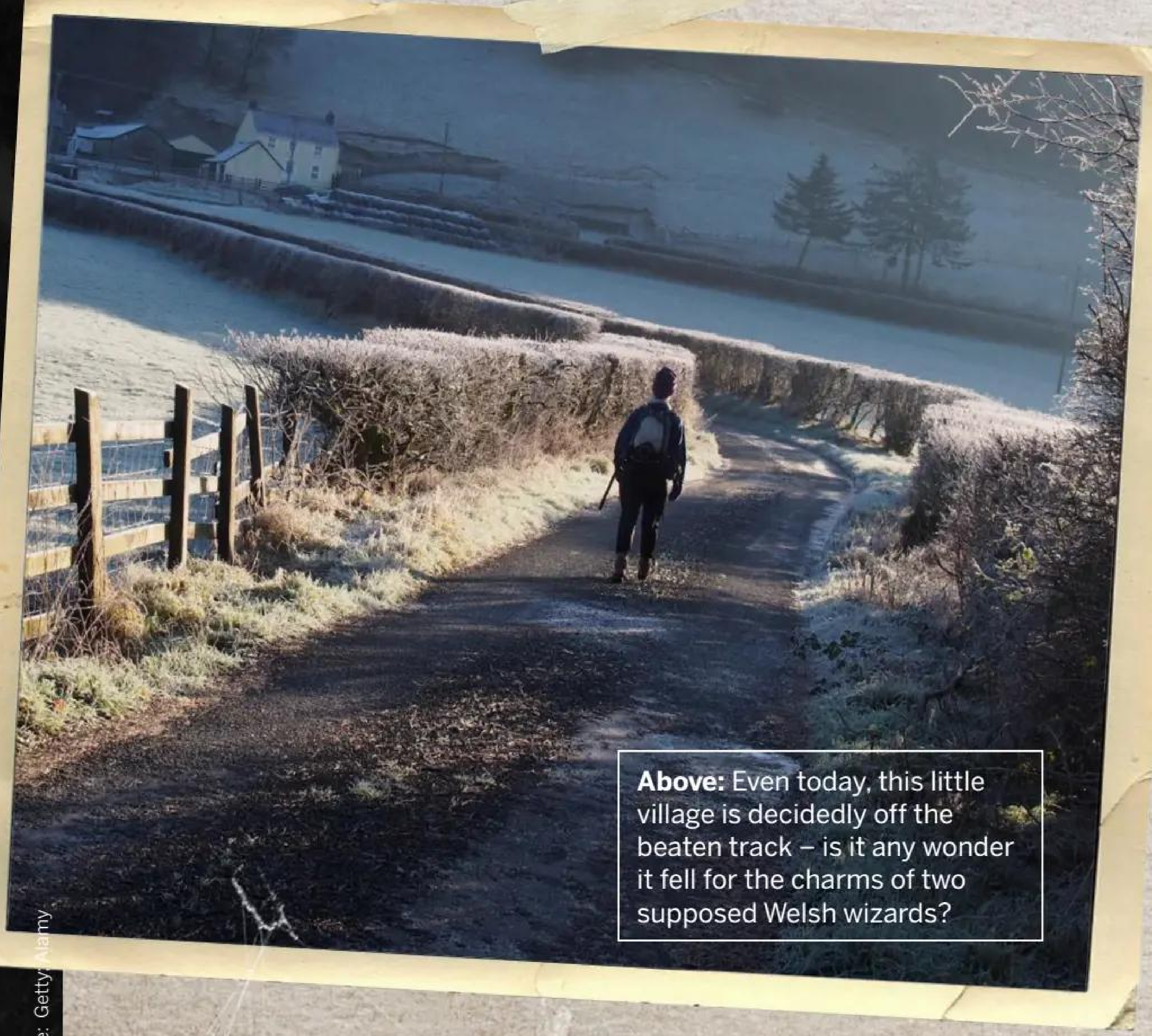


Above: Monique Wilson, the 1960s 'Queen of British witches' at the Isle of Man Folklore Centre of Superstition and Witchcraft in 1964

THE WIZARDS OF CWRT Y CADNO

Location: Carmarthenshire, South Wales

In the rural Wales of the 19th century, you could be forgiven for getting your doctor mixed up with a wizard. After all, both studied incomprehensible books, knew strange secrets about the body and its functions, and could heal sicknesses and injuries well past the skills of an ordinary apothecary or nurse. Father and son John and Henry Harries were two such doctors. But, it was rumoured the pair, who lived in Carmarthenshire's Cothi Valley, were also wizards. Both London-trained surgeons, John was reputed to have cured a man who had been infected with demon-mischief by swallowing a tadpole given to him by a quack healer. He prescribed an emetic, and when the man vomited, a live frog hopped out. Young Henry quickly capitalised on the family reputation, offering not only medical attention but fortune-telling services too. Bills for services rendered – medical or otherwise – were signed off with the chilling caveat "Unless the above amount is paid to me… adverse means will be resorted to for the recovery". Henry died of tuberculosis at just 28, but John, having tried to cheat the death he had seen foretold in the stars, ended his days ignominiously, by falling off a ladder. It's said that the pallbearers at his funeral felt a sudden lightening of their load, as the Devil spirited John Harries's body to hell to atone for his sins.



Above: Even today, this little village is decidedly off the beaten track – is it any wonder it fell for the charms of two supposed Welsh wizards?

Image source: Getty, Alamy

THE WITCHES OF CULROSS

Location: Fife, Scotland

Scotland was the most fervent persecutor of witchcraft in the British Isles, its fervour fanned by the obsession of King James VI (who became James I of England after the death of Elizabeth I). As mentioned earlier, James became a self-styled expert on witches after he believed them to have tried to thwart his honeymoon night with his new bride. Culross, in Fife, was one of the most enthusiastic Scottish towns when it came to identifying and prosecuting witches. This beautiful little town became famous for the ferocity of its witch trials – there is now a plaque commemorating the 32 women who were tried in the 16th and 17th centuries, and for more details on individual victims, visitors can follow the Witches Trail around Fife to discover their stories. Overall it's a tale of horror, from the priest who would stop mid-sermon to pick out a female parishioner seemingly at random and denounce them as a witch, to the 'witch-prickers' whose job it was to test women for witchcraft by poking them with a bodkin (a sharp implement like a large fat needle), which would apparently identify telltale marks of the Devil. Accused women were imprisoned, tormented and deprived of sleep until finally, dazed, dehydrated and in pain, they were repeatedly harangued until a 'confession' – taken to be a nodding or dropping of the head – was produced. The unfortunate victims were then strangled before their corpses were burned at the stake as an example to other, would-be witches.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

PAPER GALLERY

PENDLE

Location: Lancashire, England

Twelve people were found accused of murder by witchcraft in the villages surrounding the mysterious Pendle Hill in 1612, all of whom were sentenced to death by hanging save one, who died before the trial. You can learn about the Pendle Witch Trials by visiting the Pendle Heritage Centre in Barrowford. Retrace the accused's journey to their execution in Lancaster by following the Pendle Witches Trail walk, spot the witch sculptures dotted throughout the countryside, or jump in the car and follow the road trail.

BURLEY

Location: Hampshire, England

Burley's link to magic is mostly thanks to infamous white witch of the 1950s, Sybil Leek. Due in part to the locals finding issue with her peculiar nature, her habit of wearing a long black cloak and her pet jackdaw perched upon her shoulder, Sybil was cast out of Burley and moved to America – but not before she had made her mark on the historic New Forest village. You can find a large portrait of Sybil, along with a ghostly cat and a large variety of witchy goodies for sale, in A Coven of Witches – the local shop she was responsible for naming.

BURLEY
Jubilee 2012
NEW FOREST CYCLING
Cycle Hire
SPENCERS

BOSCASTLE

Location: Cornwall, England

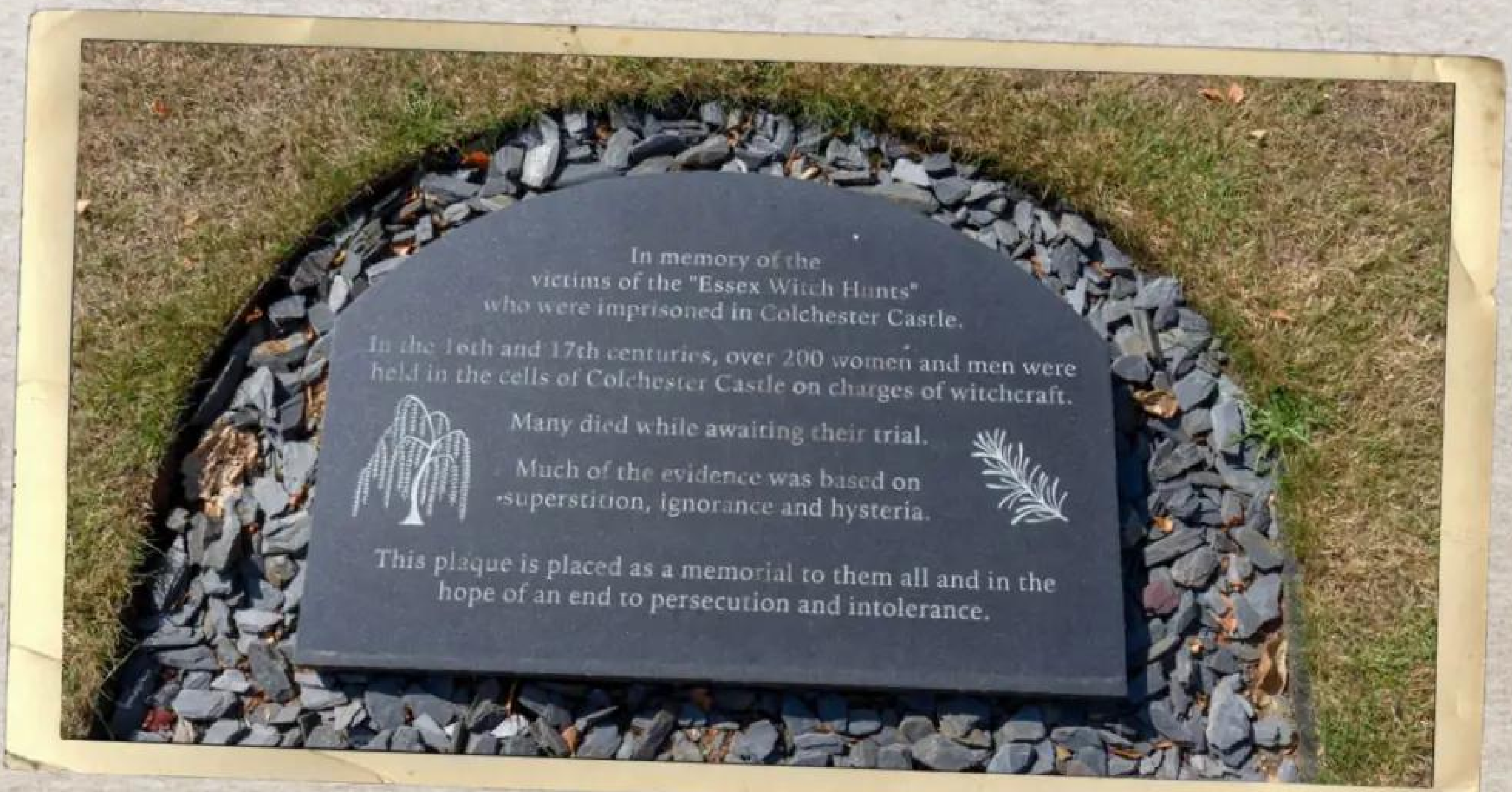
This small, picturesque coastal village is home to possibly the largest collection of occult items in the world. Founded by Cecil Williamson, a friend of Gerald Gardner and Aleister Crowley, the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic features thousands of unique artefacts related to many esoteric traditions, but focuses heavily on historical folk magic. Step inside a traditional 18th-century cottage and inspect herbal remedies and divination tools, pay your respects to those who lost their lives in England's early-modern witch trials, and discover the origins of Wicca.

THE WITCHES OF BOSCASTLE
SELLING THE WIND
WITCHCRAFT MUSEUM
WITCHCRAFT MUSEUM
flags, flax, fodder and frig

COLCHESTER

Location: Essex, England

Mainland England was by no means immune to the witch panics of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the eastern county of Essex accused around 1,000 people of witchcraft during these dark times. The county capital of Colchester was the hub of local justice and today is a historical town well worth a visit. Alongside its rich medieval, Roman and ancient British archaeology is a wealth of witch-related history. Exhibitions on the town's witchy past are frequent, while Colchester Castle commemorates the more than 200 victims of witchcraft accusations that were held in its dungeons with a plaque (there are other tributes to Essex's witch trial victims around the county, notably in Chelmsford). In fact, witchcraft-related history and artefacts are so prevalent in Essex that one group of locals is even fundraising to create the county's very own Essex Witchcraft Museum. You can show your support by visiting **essexwitchmuseum.co.uk** and checking out the fun merchandise and pop-up events schedule.



In memory of the
victims of the "Essex Witch Hunts"
who were imprisoned in Colchester Castle.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, over 200 women and men were held in the cells of Colchester Castle on charges of witchcraft.

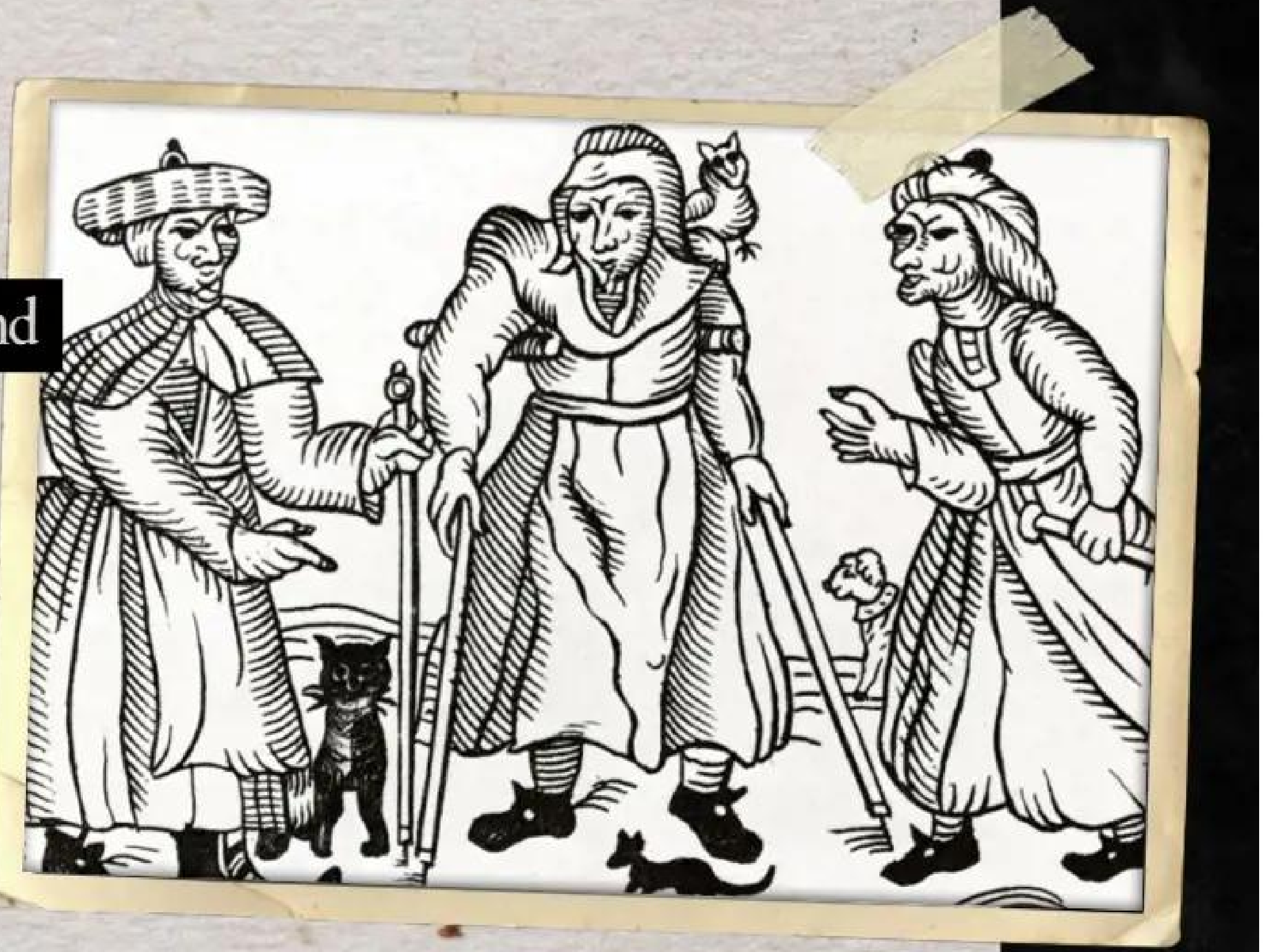
Many died while awaiting their trial.

Much of the evidence was based on superstition, ignorance and hysteria.

This plaque is placed as a memorial to them all and in the hope of an end to persecution and intolerance.

BELVOIR

Location: Leicestershire, England



Joan Flower and her daughters Philippa and Margaret were taken on as servants by the household of the 6th Earl of Rutland in Belvoir Castle in the early 1600s, but were disliked by the other servants and sacked shortly afterwards. A year or two passed, and the Earl's family were suddenly stricken by a sickness that killed their children, including the Earl's son and heir. The Flower family were suspected of causing their deaths by witchcraft. Soon accusations were flying that Joan had a familiar spirit in the shape of a cat called Rutterkin, a devilish creature who helped her cast her evil spells. The Earl and his wife were so convinced of the Flowers' guilt that their grave in St Mary the Virgin's church in Bottesford records that the couples' young sons were killed by "wicked practises and sorcerye". The Flower daughters were hanged, but Joan Flower is said to have choked on communion bread on her way to prison after claiming that no witch would be able to eat something that was so holy.

In 2013, historian Tracy Borman theorised that George Villiers, a notorious favourite of the witchcraft-obsessed James I, framed the women to cover up his poisoning of the Rutland heirs. He married their surviving sister Katherine, which Borman suggests was in the hope of gaining the earldom for himself, although in actual fact it passed to the Earl's younger brother.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

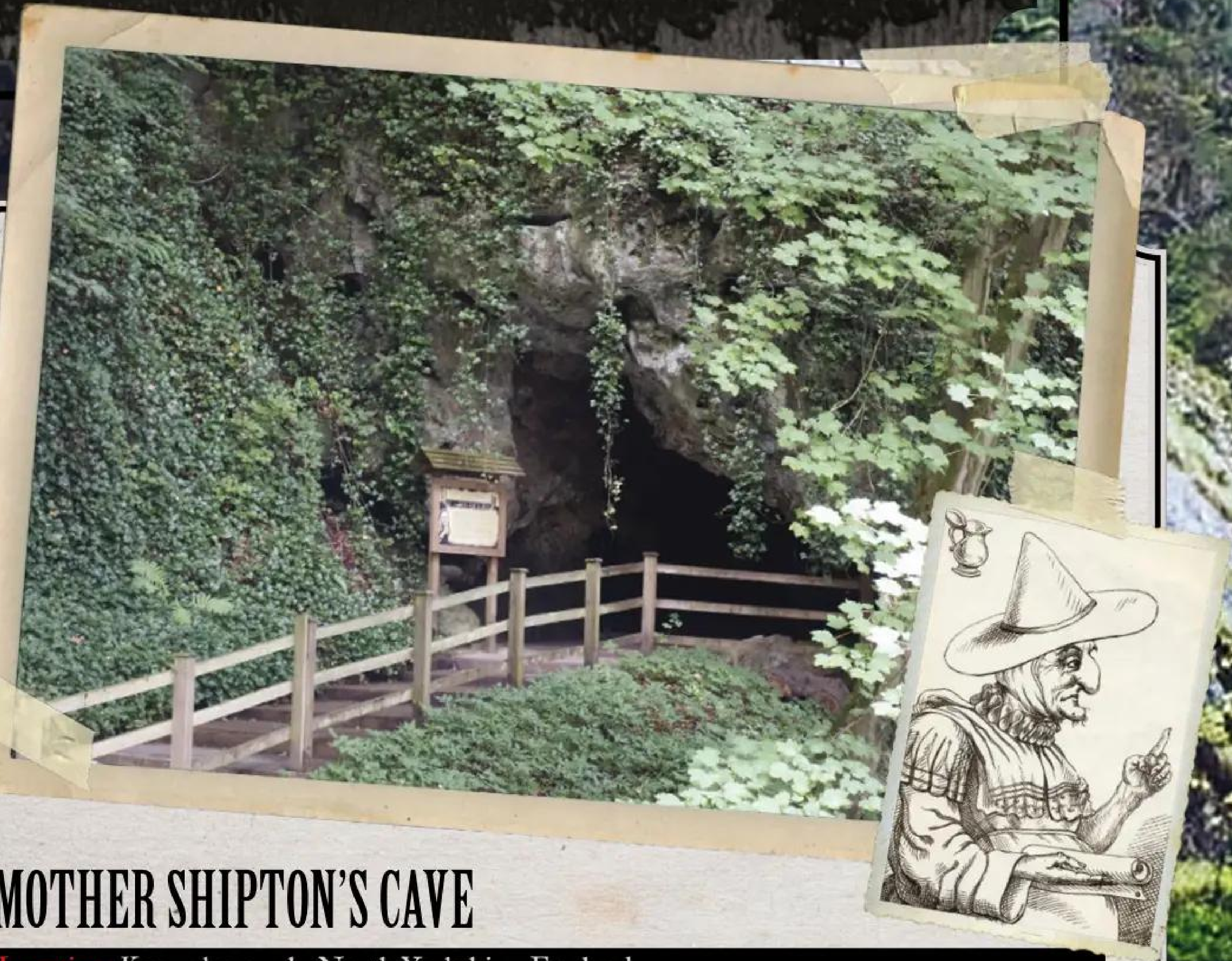
DO YOU DARE VISIT THE WITCHES' CAVES?

Fairytale witches live in dingy hovels or fearsome towers, but in folklore they dwell in caves, making their lairs much easier to find!

WOOKEY HOLE

Location: Wells, Somerset, England

According to legend, the Wookey Hole Witch lived here over 1,000 years ago. Unlucky in love, she had grown bitter about romance, cursing happy couples from her lair. The locals asked the Abbot of Glastonbury for help, and he sent a monk to the cave. Furious at the intrusion, the witch threw spells at the monk, but they bounced off. In retaliation, the monk hurled holy water at her and she turned to stone. You can find her, now a rock formation, in the first chamber. People believe the small, lumpy stalagmite at her feet is her dog. In 1912, a dig revealed human remains in the cave, but the bones belonged to a man. To see The Witch, book a tour of the cave.



MOTHER SHIPTON'S CAVE

Location: Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, England

In local legend, Ursula Sontheil was born in the cave in 1488 during a thunderstorm. Her mother refused to name her father, leading to rumours he was the Devil himself. Separated from her mother at a young age, Sontheil stayed close to the cave as she grew up and learned to make potions with the plants she found in the nearby woods. After her husband died, she kept his surname and became known as Mother Shipton. People mocked her for her apparent witch-like appearance, but happily made use of her talent for healing and fortune-telling. She became known as a prophetess, and apparently foretold the Great Fire of London and the invention of ships made of iron. People visit her cave now for the Petrifying Well, whose waters turn items left there slowly into stone. The cave is also England's oldest tourist attraction, having seen visitors since way back in 1630!

Image source: Getty; Alamy;

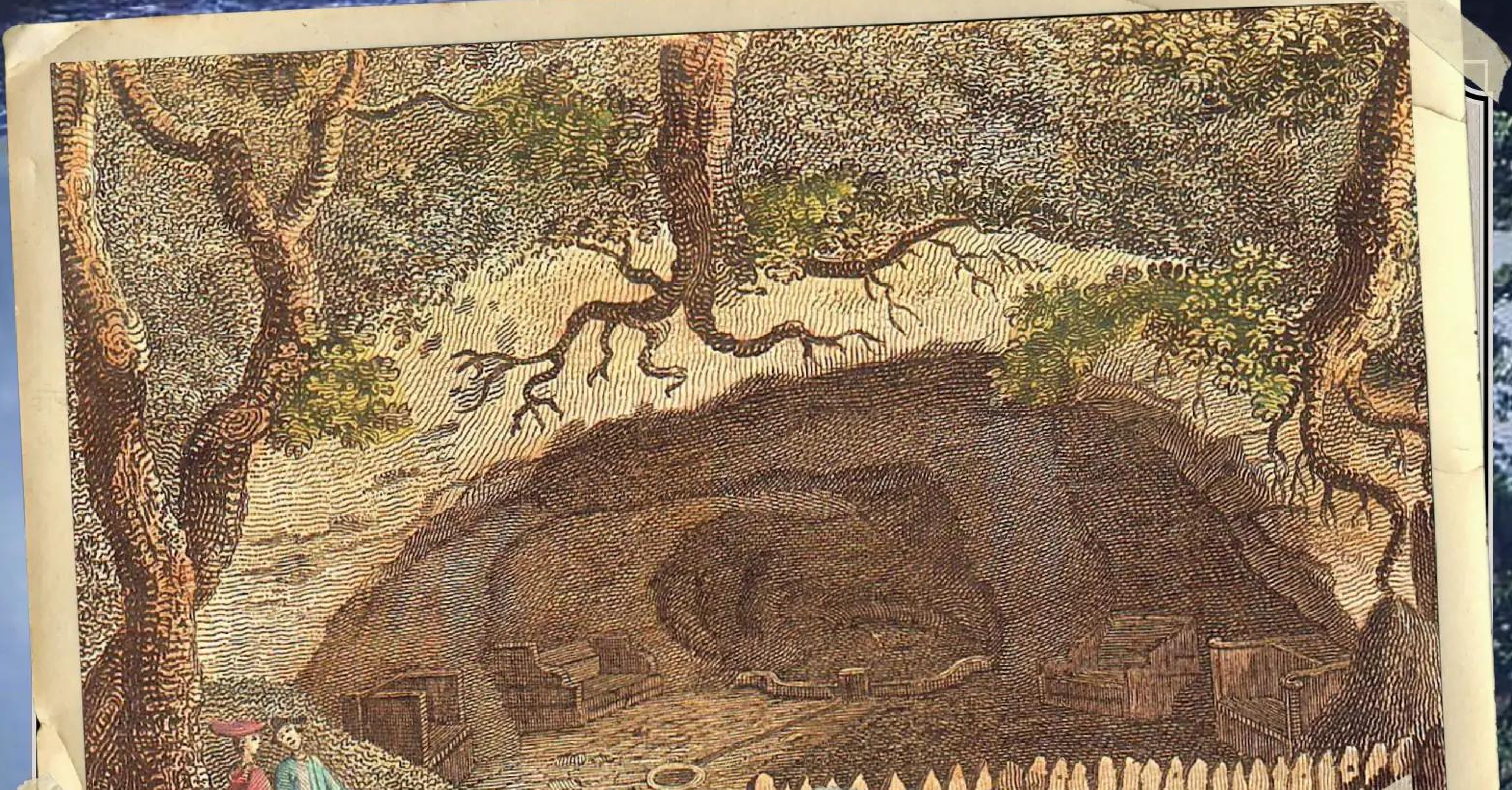
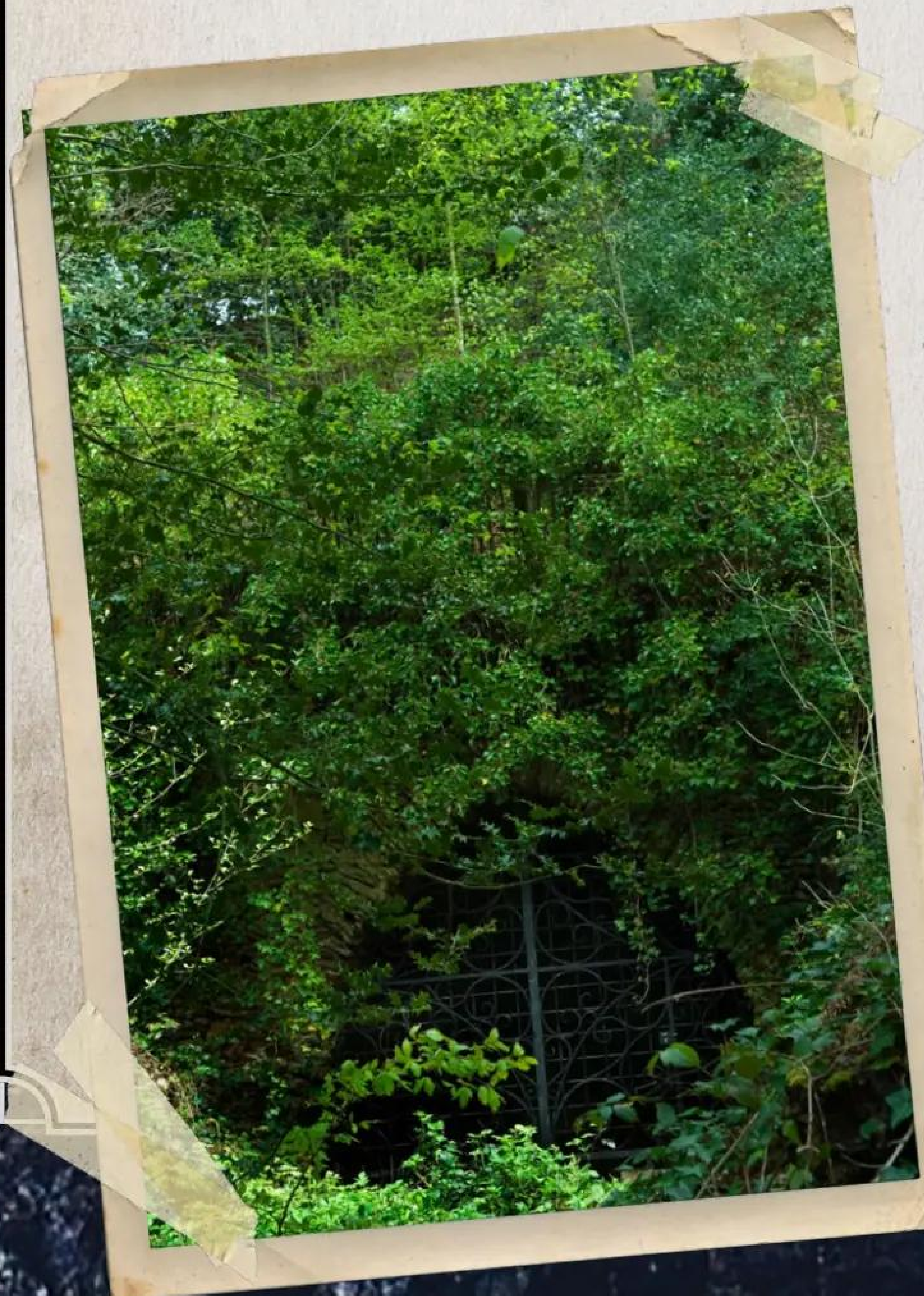


Image source: Wikipedoa Commons / BabelStone

MOTHER LUDLAM'S CAVE

Location: Moor Park, Surrey, England

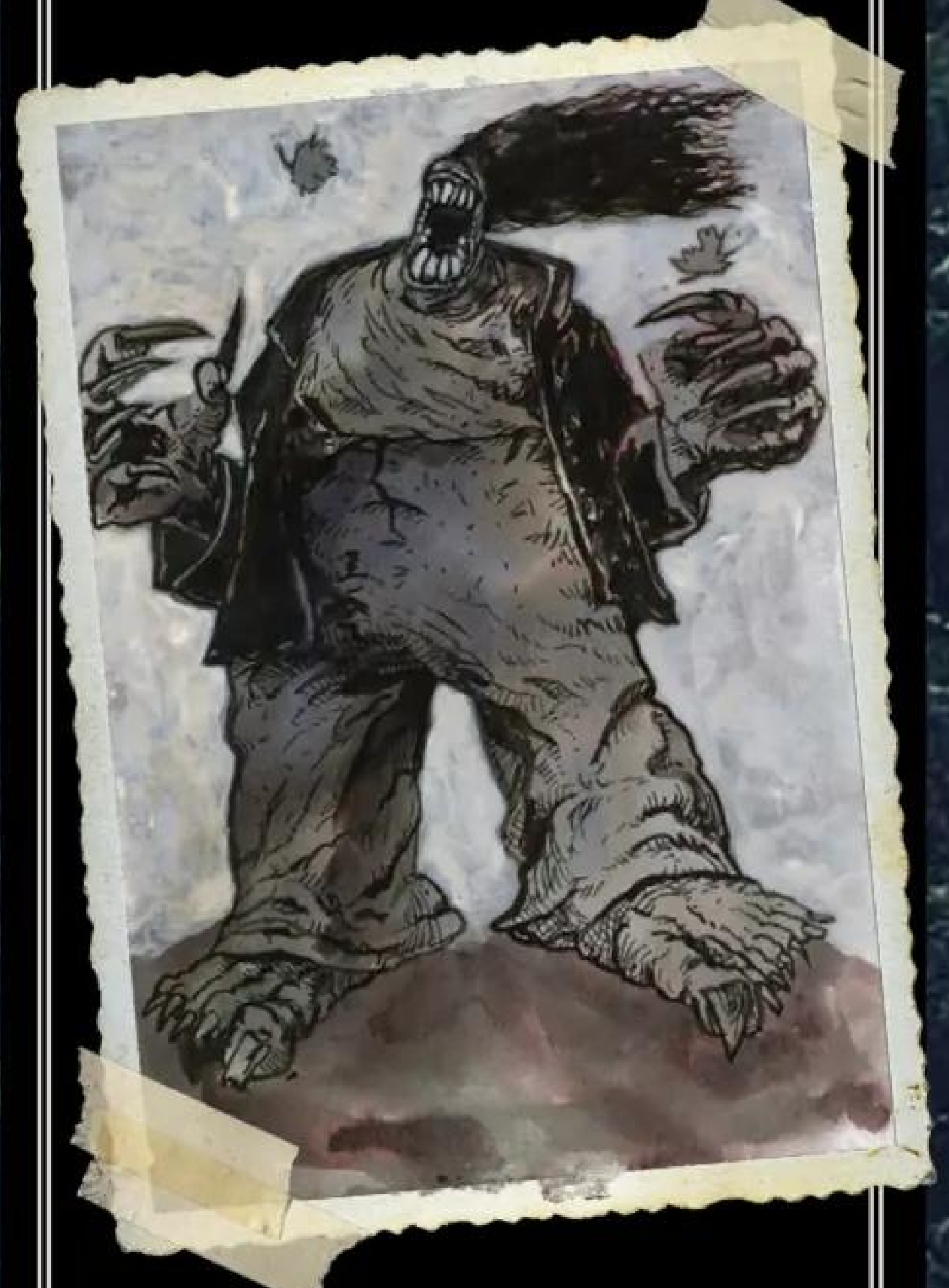
Mother Ludlam's Cave is a small grotto in the sandstone cliff of the Wey Valley. Thought to have been forged by a natural spring, it is believed that the cave was a sacred Celtic site, later enlarged by 7th-century monks. By the 12th century it was known as 'Ludewell' in honour of the mythological king of Britain, Lud, who founded London and retreated to the spring to heal his battle wounds. But its not just divine kings that are associated with the cave, its other namesake is the folklore figure of Mother Ludlam – also known as the White Witch of Waverley – a renowned healer who made the cavern her home. According to legend, the kind woman was always prepared to lend a helping hand, cooking utensil or even the shirt off her own back. But when Satan came knocking to borrow her beloved cauldron, she declined. The crafty beast stole it anyway, prompting Mother Ludlam to chase him across the land, causing dents in the earth now known as the Devil's Jumps. Luckily for Mother Ludlam, the Devil tripped and dropped her pot on the hill now known as Kettle Bury, leading her to take it to Frensham Church for safekeeping – where it remains to this day. The cavern was further excavated during the 18th century, when popularity in exploring its mysteries peaked. The addition of an arched entrance only adds to its allure, but unfortunately venturing into the cave is no longer allowed. You needn't go inside to experience the paranormal though – just climb to the highest peak of Devil's Jumps, Stony Jump, and whisper to the faeries and you might be able to borrow Mother Ludlam's coveted cauldron yourself. Some say the cave is the entrance to the faery realm itself.



> "Luckily for Mother Ludlam, the Devil tripped and dropped her pot, leading her to take it to Frensham Church"

BLACK ANNIS' BOWER CLOSE

A small cave in the Dane Hills, Leicestershire, is believed to be the home of Black Annis. This folklore favourite is an old crone with a blue face and iron claws, who enjoys feasting on humans. She makes a great cautionary tale since she prowls the area at night, seeking to snatch up misbehaving children. According to legend, she dug the cave out of the cliff using only her claws.



MOTHER GRUNDY'S PARLOUR

Creswell Crags is a limestone gorge in Nottinghamshire, dating back to the Ice Age. One of its caves is known as Mother Grundy's Parlour, named for its 18th-century resident. She left the local village of Creswell after being accused of witchcraft and moved into the cave. The villagers invited her back after she cured the child of a local landowner, but Mother Grundy chose to stay in her cave. Another cave also has a huge collection of what have been called "protective witch marks" carved into walls.

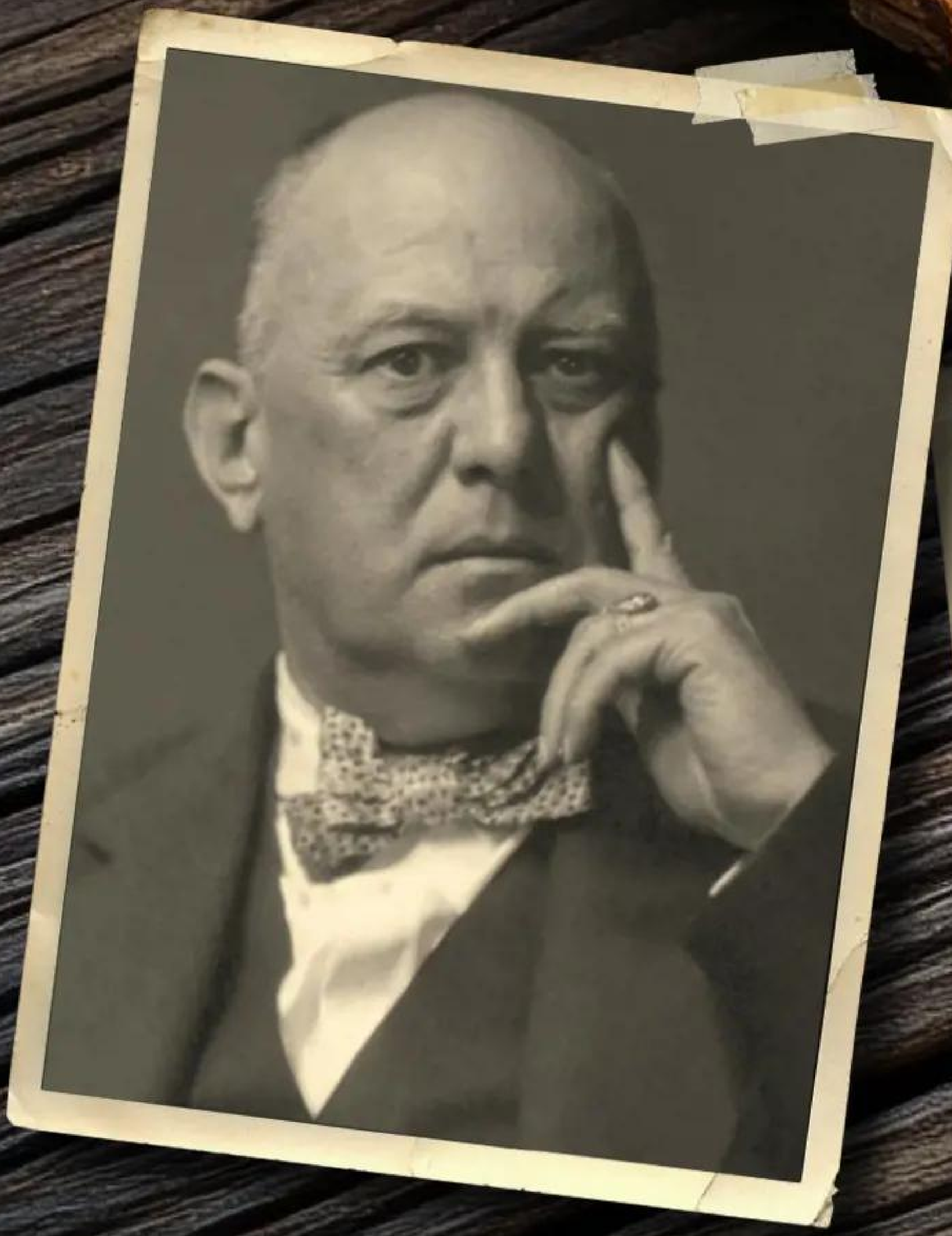
Image source: Geograph

ECHOES OF THE OCCULT

From ancient times to the modern era, the rich history of the occult in the United Kingdom echoes down the ages

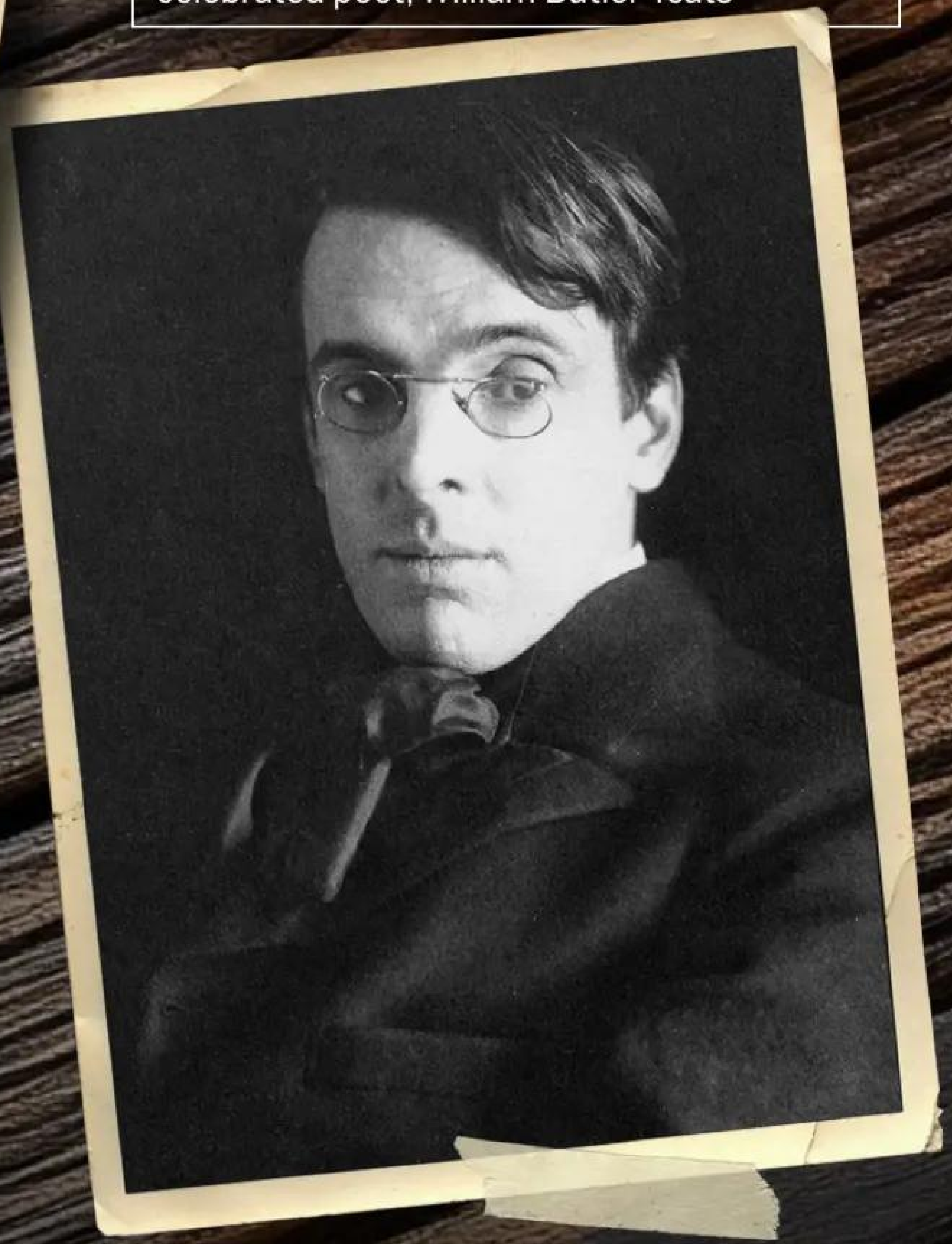
Since before the dawn of recorded history, the British Isles rang to the sounds of Pagan worship and the rituals of the Druids. This lost landscape is the place from which the interest in magic and mystery reached throughout history, reflected in the fascination with alchemy that gripped the medieval people. Later, in the Elizabethen era, secret societies such as The School of Night met to discuss not only how to turn base metals into gold, but atheism and other beliefs that were, at the time, punishable by the most extreme means imaginable. The Freemasons followed in the 18th century and by the Victorian era, a new movement was taking shape. At the heart of many of these societies were concepts dating back into Pagan times, and ceremonial magic was a key part of the rituals and beliefs. Inspired by the Druids, whose priests and astrologers looked to the natural world and the heavens for their divine inspiration, in an increasingly technological age it was hardly surprising that some people harked back towards that ancient, ceremonial magic. Fascinated by the possibilities offered by the ritual and ceremony of the ancients, in 1888 Freemasons William Robert Woodman, William Wynn Westcott and Samuel Liddell Mathers established the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. As well as their involvement in Freemasonry, the three men were also members of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, itself a society devoted to topics such as alchemy, mysticism and occult symbolism.

The Golden Dawn was unusual in that it welcomed women as well as men and was based on the so-called ‘Cipher Manuscripts’, which laid out the rituals and teachings



Above: Known to some as the 'Great Beast', Aleister Crowley gloried in his reputation as the man who knew no limits

Below: Offering a taste of magic in a mundane world, the 19th-century fascination with the occult attracted the likes of the celebrated poet, William Butler Yeats



of the order. Central to their beliefs was the Hermetic Qabalah, tarot, geomancy, astrology, and alchemy. Grounded in both Freemasonry as well as teachings supposedly imparted by supernatural beings known as the Secret Chiefs, the members of the Golden Dawn believed that they could harness ancient magic in modern life. They followed the teachings of Hermeticism, which were derived from the legendary figure, Hermes Trismegistus, who taught that spiritual growth through magic was the only way forward. However, the leaders of the order were riven with dispute and within a few years of its starting, it was already in decline. Multiple offshoots were founded and one man in particular became synonymous with the Golden Dawn.

Aleister Crowley joined the Order in 1898 and progressed rapidly through the lower grades, to the Second Order – the second-most important of the three tiers that made up the society. His controversial lifestyle ruffled feathers among other followers and things reached a head when Crowley attempted to take over a group temple in London. The case ended in court, where the Order won the day. Crowley went on to found the religious and spiritual movement, Thelema, based on the principle “Do what thou wilt”.

While the Golden Dawn became a battle of wills and egos, the Victorians embraced the occult revival with boundless enthusiasm. Encompassing spiritualism, magic and the esoteric, the rise of the Golden Dawn and its appeal to famous names – such as WB Yeats, celebrated actress Florence Farr and Arthur Waite, the man behind the seminal Rider Waite tarot deck – were testament to its popularity and place in Victorian society.

CHECK IT OUT

Britain’s libraries offer an unmatched resource for esoteric literature and magical discovery

THE HARRY PRICE LIBRARY OF MAGICAL LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Assembled by noted psychical researcher Harry Price, this collection contains nearly 13,000 books, pamphlets and periodicals published between 1472 and the modern age. Covering everything from stage magic to spiritualism, the collection is also complemented by an archive of photographs, artefacts and ephemera.

THE LIBRARY OF AVALON IN GLASTONBURY

Founded in 1988, this is the largest publicly available library of esoteric material in the United Kingdom. The library prides itself on its complex referencing system, which enables members and visitors to its public reading room to drill down deeply into the nuances of the collection.

CHETHAM’S LIBRARY IN MANCHESTER

The oldest public library in the English-speaking world, Chetham’s Library is of particular interest for its collection of books that once belonged to the legendary astrologer and alchemist, Dr John Dee. Visitors can view the mysterious hoof print that was stamped into a table in 1595 when Dr Dee summoned Satan to Manchester. You might also catch a glimpse of the ghostly Grey Lady, though the real human skeleton that once resided in Mary’s Wing has now been moved elsewhere.

JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

With a specialist collection devoted to esoterica, Rylands holds everything from alchemical texts to experimental early photographs. It’s also rumoured to be home to no less than five ghosts, who roam about its Neo-Gothic halls.

Image source: Alamy, Getty, Wiki

HELLFIRE CAVES

Location: West Wycombe, England

In the mid-1700s among the Chiltern Hills, Sir Francis Dashwood began excavating the Hellfire Caves as the new home of his hedonistic Hellfire Club, the Order of the Friars of St Francis of Wycombe. Descending up to 400m (1,312ft) underground, the labyrinth of caves winds through tunnels and chambers culminating at the Inner Temple. What happened here until 1776 is up for debate, as the caves don't give up their secrets. They do, however, give up their ghosts. In the late 1700s, 16-year-old Suki, barmaid at the George and Dragon (still going strong!), was meant to elope with her beau at the caves. It was a trick, though, played by suitors she'd spurned, and the night tragically led to her death. To this day, she mournfully wanders the caves, hoping to find her lost love and finally become his wife. Club secretary Paul Whitehead also haunts the caves and the hills above, doomed to spend eternity searching for his heart – bizarrely, he had it buried separately when he died, and it was stolen in 1839. Overnight ghost hunters report chanting from the Inner Temple, supernatural touches, and feelings of abject terror. These events, open to the public, usually sell out – would you brave one?

WHO WERE THE HELLFIRE CLUB?

No, it's got nothing to do with Eddie Munson… These secret brotherhoods of high-society folks, scattered throughout 18th-century Britain and Ireland, were unrestrained and nihilistic. Sir Francis Dashwood's club's motto, "Do what thou wilt", speaks for itself and was later adopted by infamous occultist, Aleister Crowley. Rumours hissed of blasphemic rituals, obscene orgies and drunken parties in honour of Pagan gods. With phallic symbols and demons decorating the walls of their lairs, it's easy to see why!

THE INNER TEMPLE

BOLESKINE HOUSE

Location: Loch Ness, Inverness, Scotland

Boleskine House is an 18th century manor house situated on the south-east side of the infamous Loch Ness, but its sinister reputation has nothing to do with lake monsters. Built on the site of a church that had supposedly burned down during a service, killing everyone inside, and with a graveyard where legend told a tale of an evil wizard raising the dead, Boleskine was bought by the notorious occultist Aleister Crowley in 1899. He planned on using it for an elaborate magical ritual that involved summoning demons. When he was called to Paris before he'd completed the rites, it is said that the demons he'd invoked but never banished back to hell led to a series of misfortunes occurring at the property during the 20th century. The house's next owner committed suicide with a shotgun in what was Crowley's bedroom, after this a man and his blind wife moved in, only for him to abandon her, leaving her wandering the house unable to see. Led Zeppelin singer Jimmy Page bought the house in 1970, and his friend Malcolm Dent moved in. Dent experienced strange phenomena, such as a repeated rumbling noise, banging on his bedroom door, animalistic snorting sounds, chairs moving, doors opening and slamming shut, and rugs rolling up by themselves. In December 2015, the house inexplicably went up in flames. Luckily nobody was home, but the cause of the fire was never determined. In 2019 the Boleskine House Foundation purchased the house and planned to conserve it and open it to the public as a place of historical significance. But the curse still lingered. One week after the purchase, the house was in flames in a suspected arson attack.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

Above: Medmenham Abbey was briefly the home of Francis Dashwood and his infamous Hellfire Club, who donned monks' habits and indulged in pleasures of the flesh

MEDMENHAM ABBEY

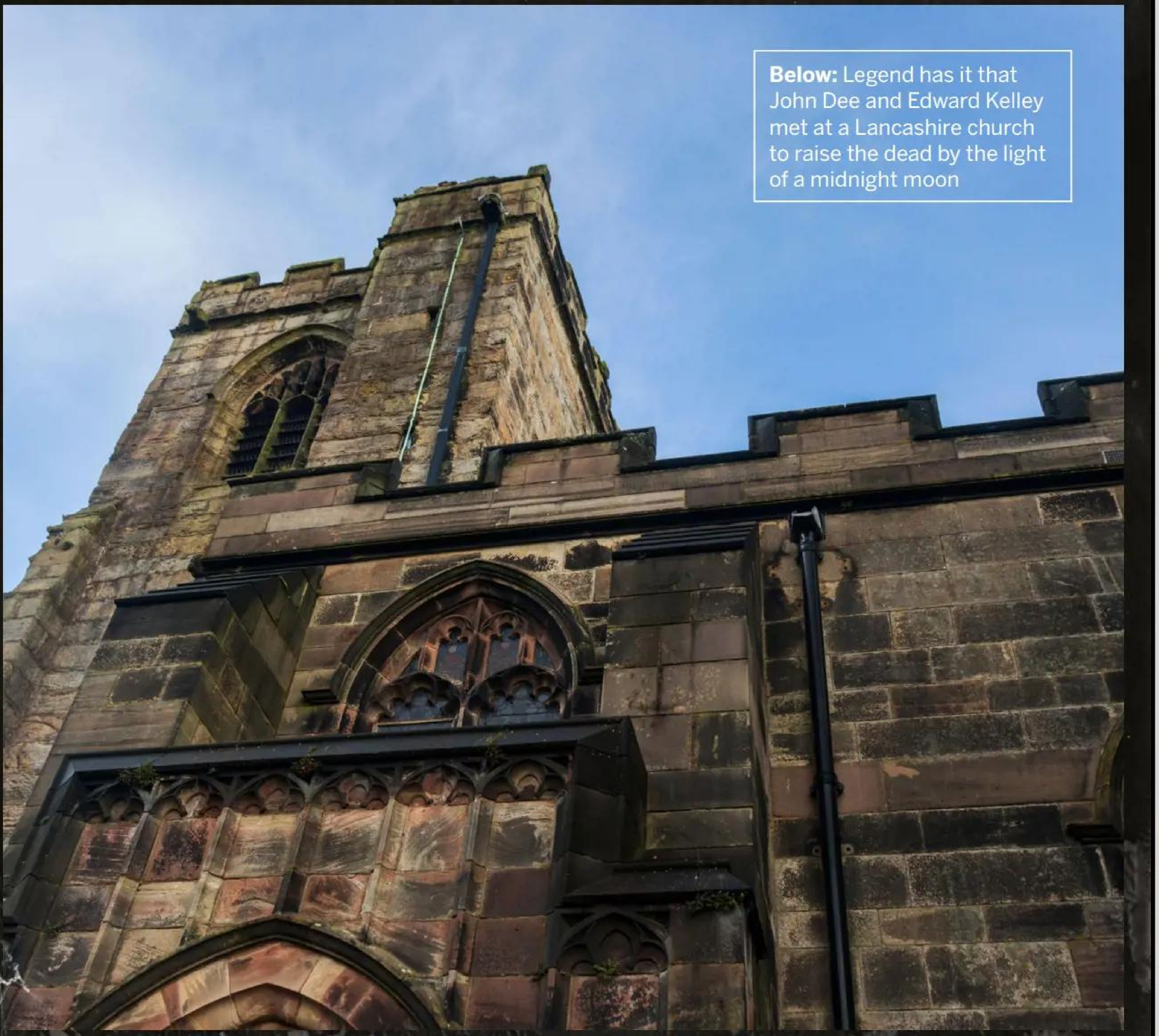
Location: Medmenham, England

Long home to an order of Cistercian monks, when the men of God were driven out of Medmedham Abbey during the Reformation, it seemed as though its story was over. That changed in the 18th century, when the scandalous Francis Dashwood and his notorious Hellfire Club moved in. Here, the so-called Friars of Medmenham indulged in orgies and black magic, tended to by sex workers dressed in the habits of nuns. The Hellfire Club departed to the caves of West Wycombe in the 1760s, leaving Medmenham to a future of private ownership and domesticity.

ST LEONARD'S CHURCH

Location: Walton-le-Dale, England

In sleepy Walton-le-Dale, not far from Preston, lies the unassuming remains of St Leonard's Church, which is rumoured to have once been the meeting place of Edward Kelley and Dr John Dee. It was in this Lancashire village, during the reign of Elizabeth I, that the two famed alchemists supposedly summoned a spirit by the power of black magic. The two masters of magic met in the gloomy churchyard at midnight, intent on raising the shade of a man who had supposedly taken the secret of a fortune in buried treasure to his grave. They exhumed the unfortunate man's coffin and, by the means of arcane magic, reanimated the corpse. It stood up in the open grave and uttered a number of prophecies which, according to local lore, would all come true. The written accounts of the meeting and ritual contain often conflicting information with regards to dates, location and even attendees, meaning that what actually happened on that fateful midnight remains irresistibly open to conjecture. All that stands of the original church today is the chancel and the tower, and the oldest grave to be found in the churchyard dates from 1628, nearly 70 years after Dee and Kelley supposedly raised the dead in Lancashire.



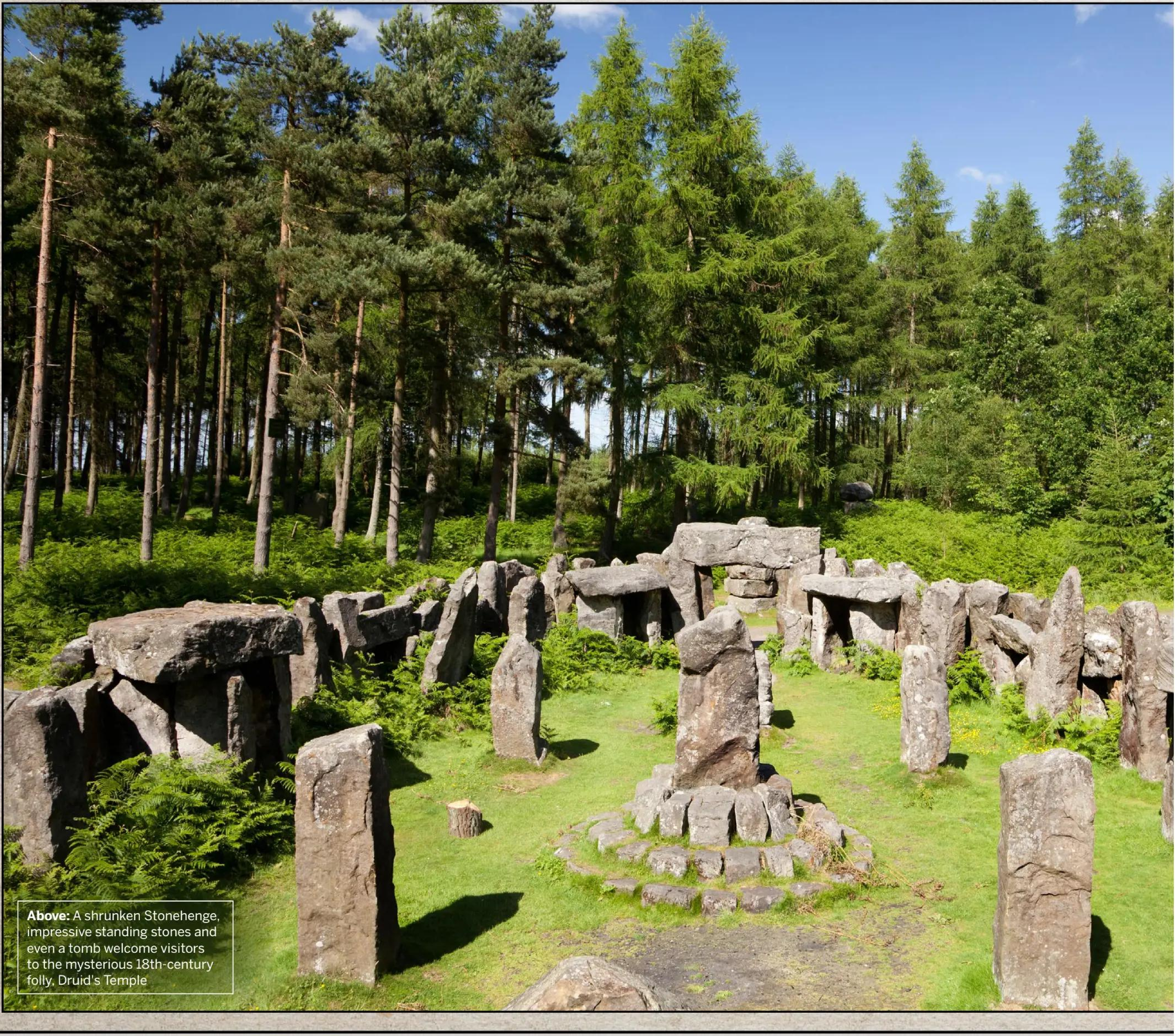
Below: Legend has it that John Dee and Edward Kelley met at a Lancashire church to raise the dead by the light of a midnight moon

Image source: Getty; Alamy

DRUID'S TEMPLE

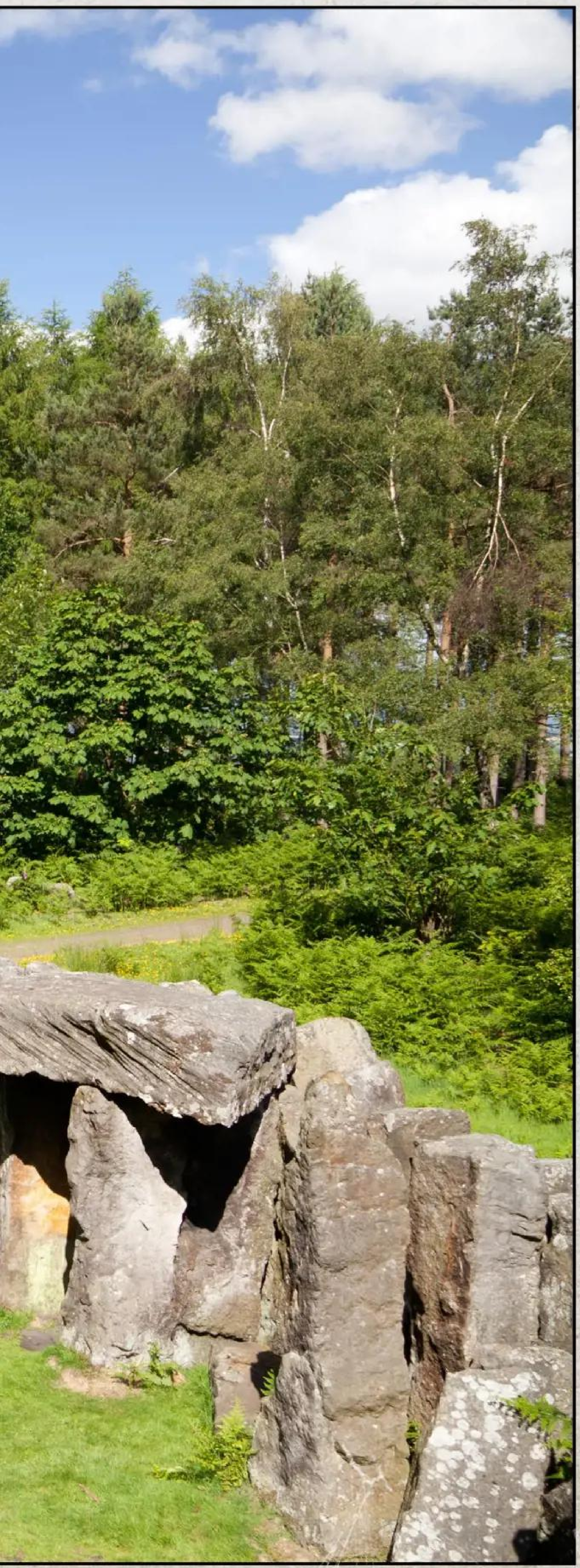
Location: Ilton, England

In an isolated clearing within a pine forest on the Swinton Estate, don't be shocked if you stumble across a shrunken-down version of Stonehenge and a host of other standing stones. This is the Druid's Temple, an 18th-century folly built by William Danby, the eccentric former sheriff of Yorkshire. Exactly when and how the structures were constructed is a mystery, but the folly is an homage to the age's fascination with the ancients. A monolith carved with the signs of the zodiac and an avenue of standing stones stand sentry on the approach to the Druid's Temple, lending an aura of tantalising mysticism. Thanks to the mystery around its construction, Druid's Temple is rich in rumour and lore. On the practical side, some claim its construction was a philanthropic act by the squire, who wanted to give local workers a job and living. Less charitable are legends that the stones were once the home of a hermit, who was hired by Danby to live in the folly, speaking to nobody. Halfway through his seven-year contract, the hermit fled, tormented by his strange surroundings and the dark rituals rumoured to take place there.



Above: A shrunken Stonehenge, impressive standing stones and even a tomb welcome visitors to the mysterious 18th-century folly, Druid's Temple

> "Thanks to the mystery around its construction, Druid's Temple is rich in rumour and lore"



Below: A ghostly Cavalier searches for his lost treasure, while fearsome eagles wreak revenge on those who try to steal it at Castell Coch

CASTELL COCH

Location: Tongwynlais, Wales

Standing on the site of a former Norman castle, the 19th-century Gothic revival Castell Coch is a dramatic presence overlooking the village of Tongwynlais. Thanks to its long history, the castle is rich in legend and lore, including rumours of an ancient tunnel that connects it to Cardiff Castle. It was deep within this tunnel that a former owner of Castell Coch supposedly hid a fortune in treasure, which he did not live to retrieve. When a party ventured into the tunnels hoping to find the treasure centuries later, they found two enormous eagles, their eyes glowing red, perched upon a chest. As the men came closer, the eagles attacked them, beating them back along the tunnel. The intrepid treasure seekers returned first with bullets, then with silver bullets and finally in the company of an exorcist, but each time the eagles prevailed, injuring the men so severely that they never dared make the trip into the tunnels again. In 1858, meanwhile, Robert Drane told of a woman who lived in Castell Coch and there witnessed the sorrowful ghost of a Cavalier disappearing through the walls. After many such encounters, locals told her that this was the master of the castle who, having buried his treasure in the tunnels, died in a shooting accident. Perhaps his spectre had returned, hoping to locate the glittering prizes that were lost to him.

TREDEGAR HOUSE

Location: Newport, Wales

By the time Evan Morgan, the last Viscount Tredegar, succeeded to the title in 1934, he already enjoyed a reputation as a noted eccentric. A favourite of Queen Mary and a major player in society, Morgan's home of Tredegar House contained a menagerie of wildlife, including a kangaroo famed for its boxing prowess. Rejoicing in his nickname of the 'Black Monk', the last Viscount Tredegar carried out unspeakable rituals in a purpose-built 'magic room'. It was here that he was joined by the infamous Aleister Crowley, who, legend has it, found the viscount's brand of magic so extreme that even the man known as the 'Great Beast' was afraid of him. Long before the Black Monk inherited the title, however, the house was famous for the sound of ghostly bells ringing to summon servants to uninhabited rooms, as well as phantom nuns silently strolling through the courtyard. The spectre of a maid still tends to the house she loved, while the unexplained perfume of fuchsia seems to herald the arrival of an otherworldly visitor to the outbuildings. Perhaps Crowley himself still walks there, but he has as yet not been added to Tredegar House's well-chronicled register of spirits.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

SPECTRES AT AQUAE SULIS

Dating back to Roman Britain, Bath has beautiful and picturesque architecture, but behind those walls are some dark tales

Location:
Bath, Somerset, England

Tips: Book your visit to the Roman Baths in advance to avoid crowds and consider a walking tour of the city

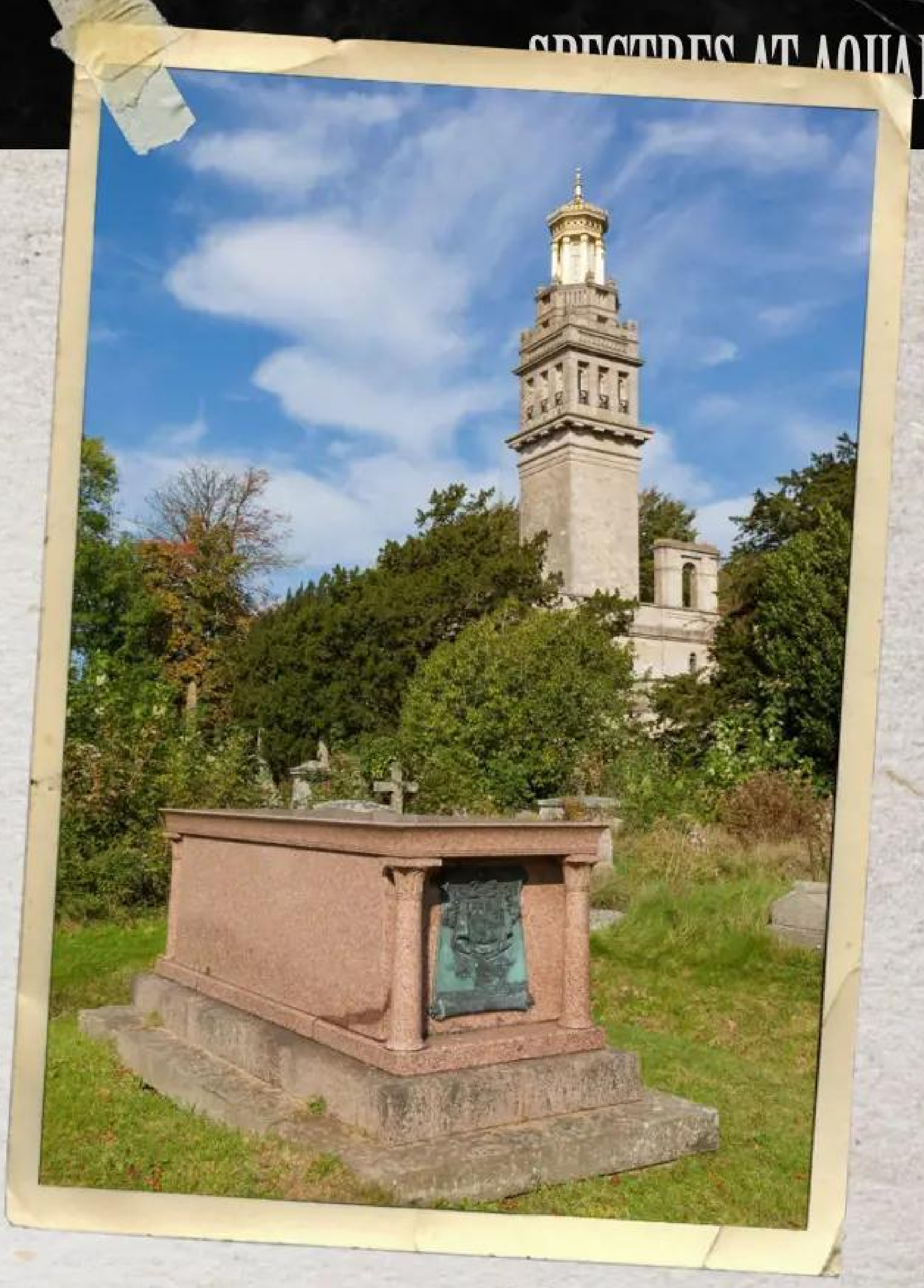
Below: A number of interesting items have been discovered in the Roman Baths, such as the curse tablets, but could there be even more?

There are things that are well known about Bath, such as it being named due to the Roman thermal spas that were founded in the 1st century CE, but the city's paranormal history is just as rich. No visit to Bath would be complete without a look around the very place that gave the city its name. The Roman Baths were built in the early years of Roman Britain, between 60 and 70 CE, and were called Aquae Sulis. The Romans would come here for various reasons; for religious meaning, to socialise and for the health benefits of the natural springs. Over the centuries, the temple had various alterations and the outside building, as it is seen today, was designed by John Wood and constructed in the 18th century. Various remnants from the Roman period can still be viewed in the museum found inside the Baths, including coins that were thrown into the spring, a pediment featuring a Gorgon head, and a bronze head from a statue of the goddess Sulis Minerva. In 1978, a series of curse tablets were also discovered. These sheets, made from lead or pewter, had inscriptions written to Sulis Minerva from people who had been wronged – mostly from thefts – asking for punishment to befall those responsible. The tablets range from the 2nd to 4th century CE and show some of the earliest examples of British Latin and Vulgar Latin. With so much historical and religious significance assigned to one spot, it's no surprise that visitors have claimed they've seen haunting figures around the grounds, and the Baths are just the beginning…

A PARANORMAL PILGRIMAGE IN BATH

We'll start our journey in the centre of the city, not too far from the aforementioned Baths. The Theatre Royal is said to be haunted by several ghosts, with the most well-known one being the Grey Lady. The theatre was opened in 1805, and over the years several actors and actresses have claimed to see the Grey Lady sitting silently in the top-left box. Some have also reported that she leaves behind the scent of jasmine. There have been various stories surrounding the ghost, with some saying that she was an ordinary woman in love with an actor – she would watch him from the box but when he didn't reciprocate the love, she killed herself. Others claim that the woman was in fact an actress who was rejected by someone she loved, and lastly, the story goes that she committed suicide after her lover was defeated in a dual. It seems that the Grey Lady does not stand still, however, as she has also been sighted inside the Garrick's Head pub, which adjoins the theatre.

A stone's throw from the theatre is The Francis Hotel, a Grade I listed building that opened in 1884. The Beatles stayed in the hotel in the early 1960s, but the building has seen some more ghostly guests. Patrons have claimed that they have heard scratching in the middle of the night, seen obscure figures moving through the corridors and some have seen a figure looking like a housekeeper that supposedly hanged herself.

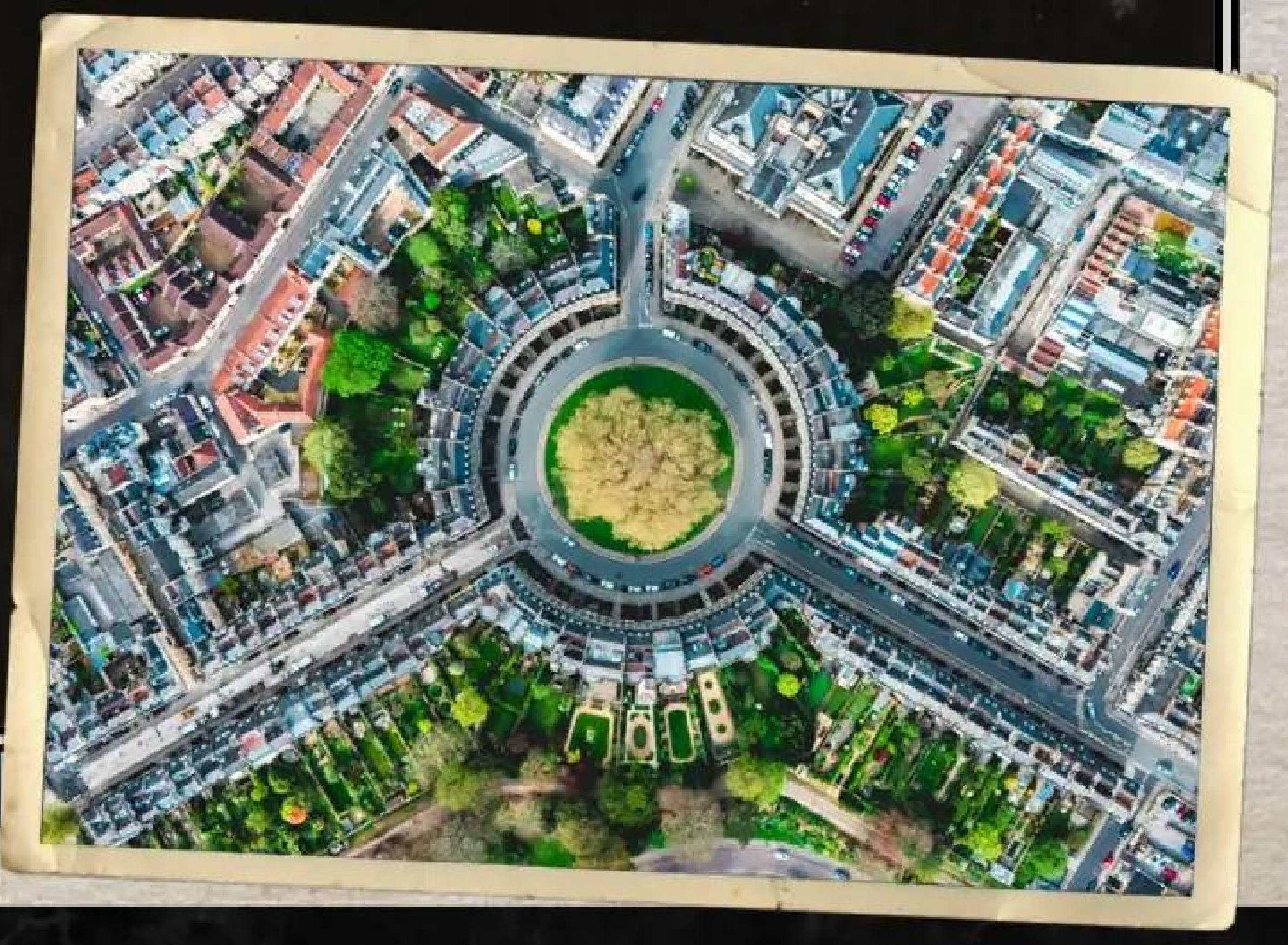


The last spot on your trip should be Beckford's Tower. The 19th-century building, constructed for William Beckford, housed his vast collection of art and exquisite furniture, all paid for through owning sugar plantations in Jamaica and trafficking enslaved Africans. Beckford used to retreat to the tower for solitude, surrounded by his possessions and away from the city. When he died in 1844, all of these items were removed and sold on. Visitors have claimed feeling cold spots when in the tower, while some have felt like they were being watched. Could this be William Beckford, looking for his lost possessions in the afterlife? Or could this be those that Beckford profited from haunting the building that their slavery paid for?

BATH CIRCUS

Symbolism hiding in plain sight

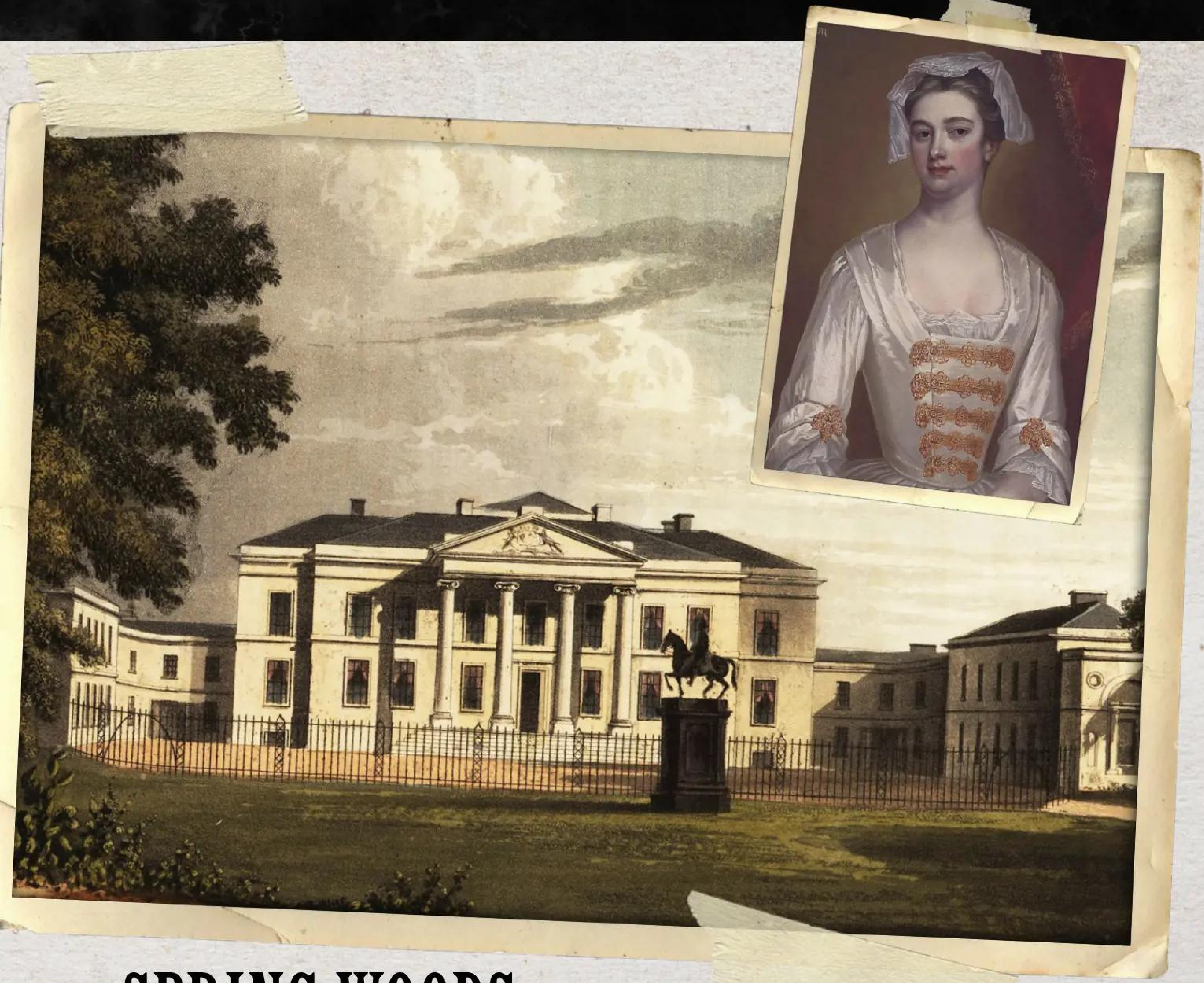
Bath is an incredibly picturesque city and some of the most beautiful buildings in Bath, such as Prior Park and Queen Square, were designed by John Wood, the Elder, a man intrigued by stone circles such as Stonehenge. He would go on to design The Circus, a ring of townhouses that form a circle with three entrances. The townhouses feature various emblems of flora and fauna, as well as nautical and masonic symbols and when viewed from the sky, the Circus, along with the neighbouring Queen Street and Gay Street, form the shape of a key, another masonic symbol.



INTO THE WOODS

Who knows what monstrous evil lurks within Britain's ancient forests, skulking in the treetops and scuttling in the shadows… want to find out?

Above: Great Britain's forests are home to floating ladies, hooded figures, strange lights, eerie mist patches, cackling witches and terrifying ancient pagan gods



SPRING WOODS

Location: Hampshire, England

The third Duke of Bolton, Charles Powlett, had an eye for the ladies. Unfortunately, his father forced him into an unhappy marriage with Lady Anne Vaughan, a philanthropic woman who was one of the first subscribers to the fund to set up London's Foundling Hospital for orphaned children. Her husband was not as charitably minded; he used his wife's income to fund a lavish and hedonistic lifestyle. Embarrassed, Lady Anne retreated from public life. As soon as Powlett inherited his father's estates and title, the couple separated.

In 1728 Powlett began an affair with the actress Lavinia Fenton, best known for her starring role as heroine Polly Peachum in satirical musical play, *The Beggar's Opera*, about the criminal underworld of London in the 18th century. Fenton was the first to play the iconic character and it stuck with her for the rest of her life – and beyond. Powlett moved his famous mistress into Westcombe Manor in Blackheath, London; the site of her former home is now known as Peachum Road in honour of her most famous role.

In 1751 Lady Anne died, and surprisingly, Powlett chose to marry his mistress, who had borne him three illegitimate children. Most gentlemen would balk at the thought of making an honourable woman out of a Charing Cross commoner, particularly one who had not only been an actress but a coffee-house waitress and, it was rumoured, a child prostitute. Nonetheless, Fenton became Lady Bolton. The couple were married abroad, far from the prying eyes of the judgemental British establishment, although the sources are confused as to whether they married in Aix, Aachen or Turin. Wherever the location, on their return, Lady Lavinia could now freely wander the halls and gardens of Hackwood Park, the hereditary seat of the Dukes of Bolton, near Basingstoke in Hampshire.

And apparently she still walks them. The Grey Lady appears in a shimmer of light in Spring Wood, the park's French-style woodland garden, which was lavishly improved during her time there. While there, she had a small folly designed by architect Sir John Vanbrugh (famous for the buildings he designed around her London home of Blackheath), which she liked to use for her daily singing.

Despite dying in Blackheath's Westcombe Manor and being buried in the churchyard of St Alfege's in nearby Greenwich, it's said that even in death, the Grey Lady prefers her favourite haunt. Perhaps her singing can still be heard in Spring Wood…

BRADLEY WOODS

Location: Lincolnshire, England

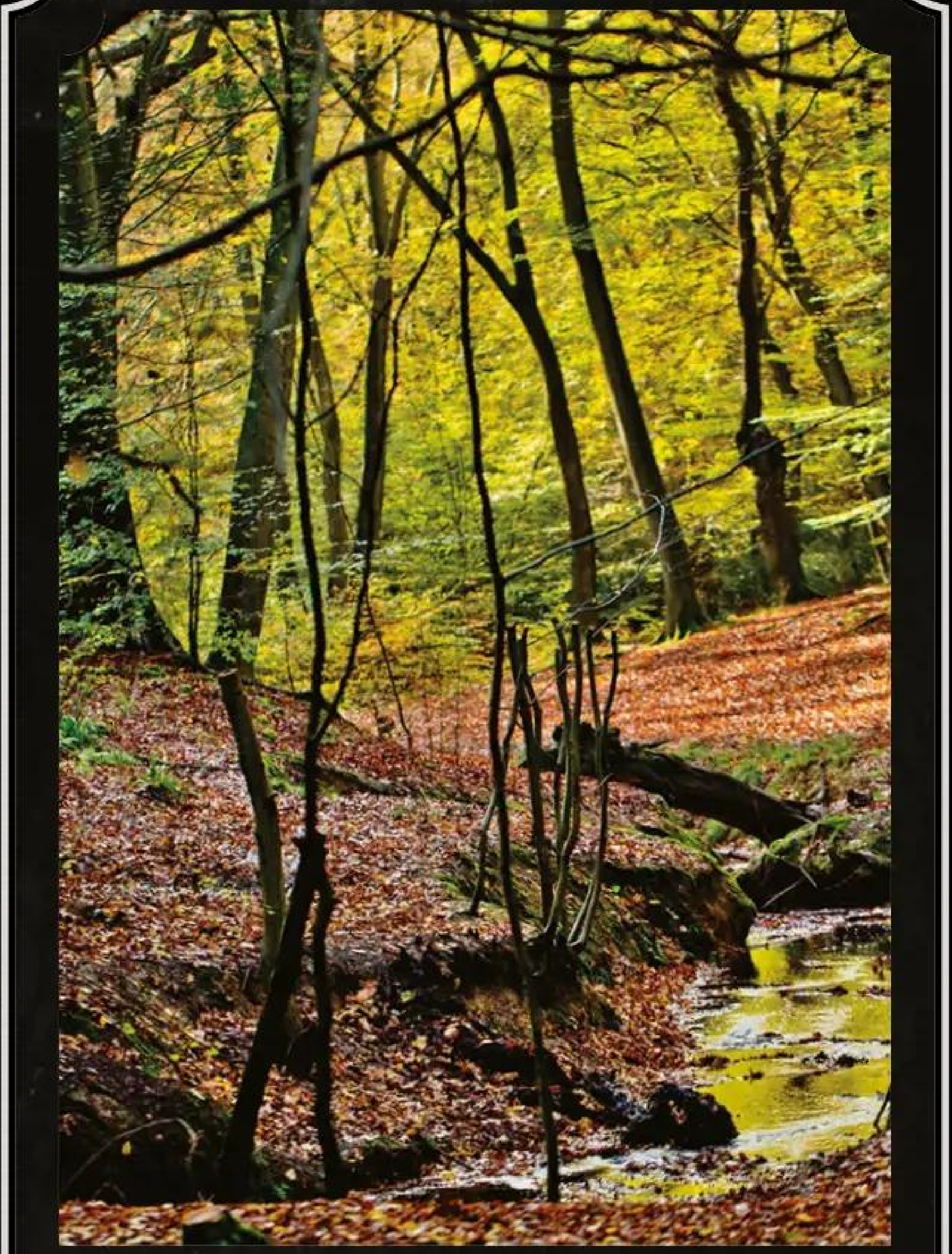
While ghost sightings are usually terrifying, those who encounter the Black Lady in these woods are often left saddened.

Her name remains a mystery, but her heartbreaking tale is said to have occurred during the War of the Roses, although other versions speak of the Barons' War. A hard-working woodsman and his beautiful young bride rented a cottage deep in the woods, outside the village of Bradley in Lincolnshire, England. Blessed with a healthy baby boy, they had just settled into a contented family routine when disaster struck. The husband was called to fight and forced to leave his wife to look after herself and their child. Months went by without word from the woodsman, and so the lady took to carrying her baby to the edge of the woods to wait for his return. Unbeknownst to her, the enemy were trekking through the trees when they came across the lone woman. Three horsemen raped her. They then left, taking her screaming son with them. At first light, the distraught mother regained consciousness and started searching for her baby, but he was nowhere to be seen. Sheer loneliness and not knowing the fate of either her husband or son eventually drove her to despair, and she died of a broken heart.

Not long after, her mournful spirit was spotted drifting through the trees, and continues to be spotted to this day. Over the years her ghostly presence has been used as a means of frightening naughty children into behaving but, although there have been many sightings of the Black Lady, there are no records of her offering any harm to those who have crossed her path.

It is said that, should you wish to see her for yourself, all you have to do is yell "Black Lady, Black Lady, I've stolen your baby!" and the heartbroken woman will appear.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

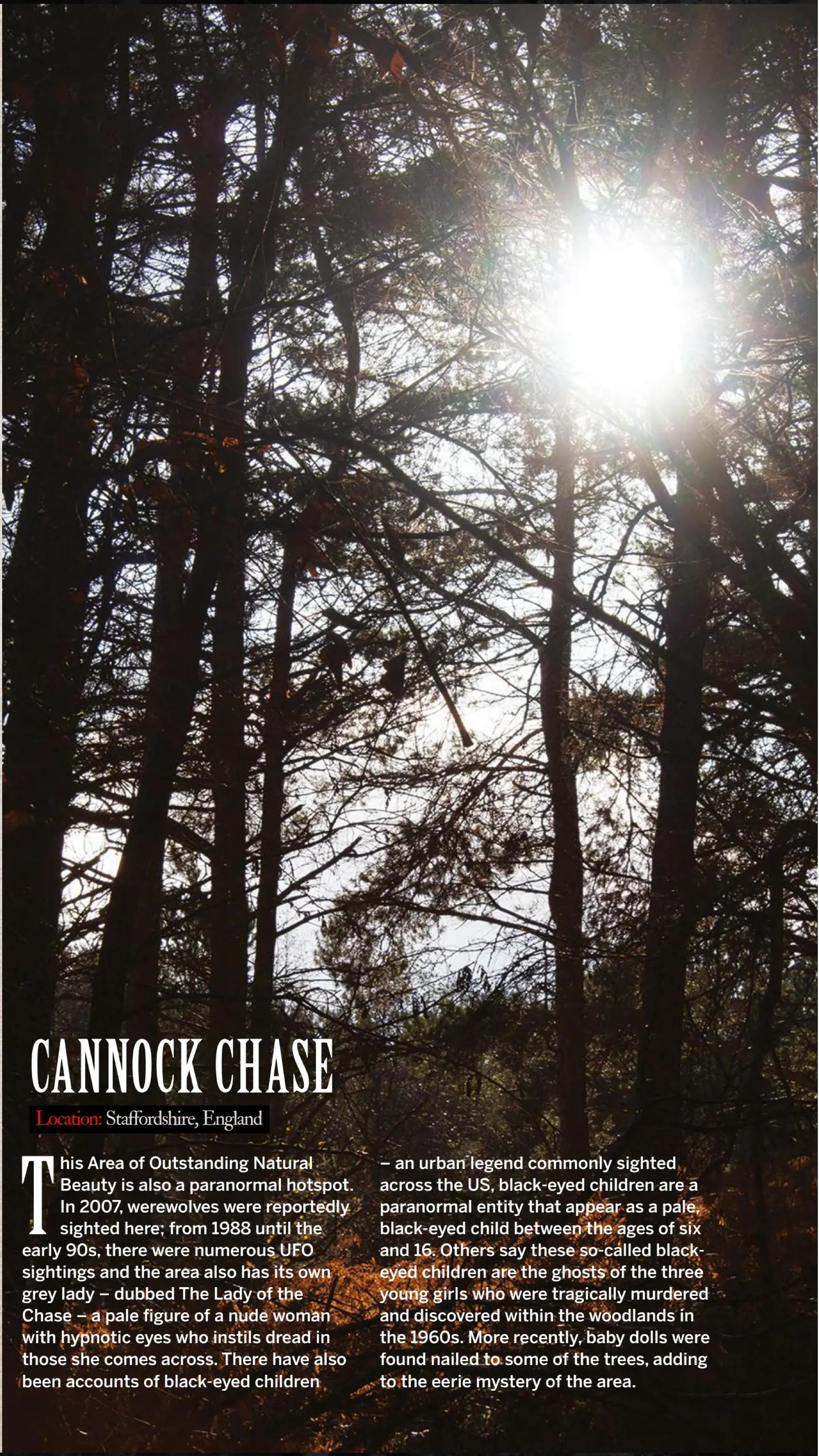


EPPING FOREST

Location: Essex, England

This large woodland north of London holds the title of England's most haunted forest. Thanks to its close proximity to the Big Smoke, it's thought many murdered bodies have been buried here, allegedly including victims of the notorious Kray twins. Highwayman Dick Turpin used a cave in the forest as a hideout for many years, the ghost of whom TV show *Most Haunted* made contact with in 2003. But more phantoms can be found between the unkempt trees of this ancient woodland, including the spirit of Celtic queen Boudicca; apparitions of a headless horseman; a horseman still in possession of his head (and a tricorn hat and black cape) atop a black stallion; the ghost of a drowned girl; a headless biker; and a horse-drawn carriage.

Other poltergeist activity is also common, with many reports of being touched or pushed by seemingly nothing. Epping Forest also has its very own execution site – Hangman's Hill – where the figure of a man can be seen. If you leave your car in neutral, it will supposedly roll upwards towards the tree that once bore a noose.



CANNOCK CHASE

Location: Staffordshire, England

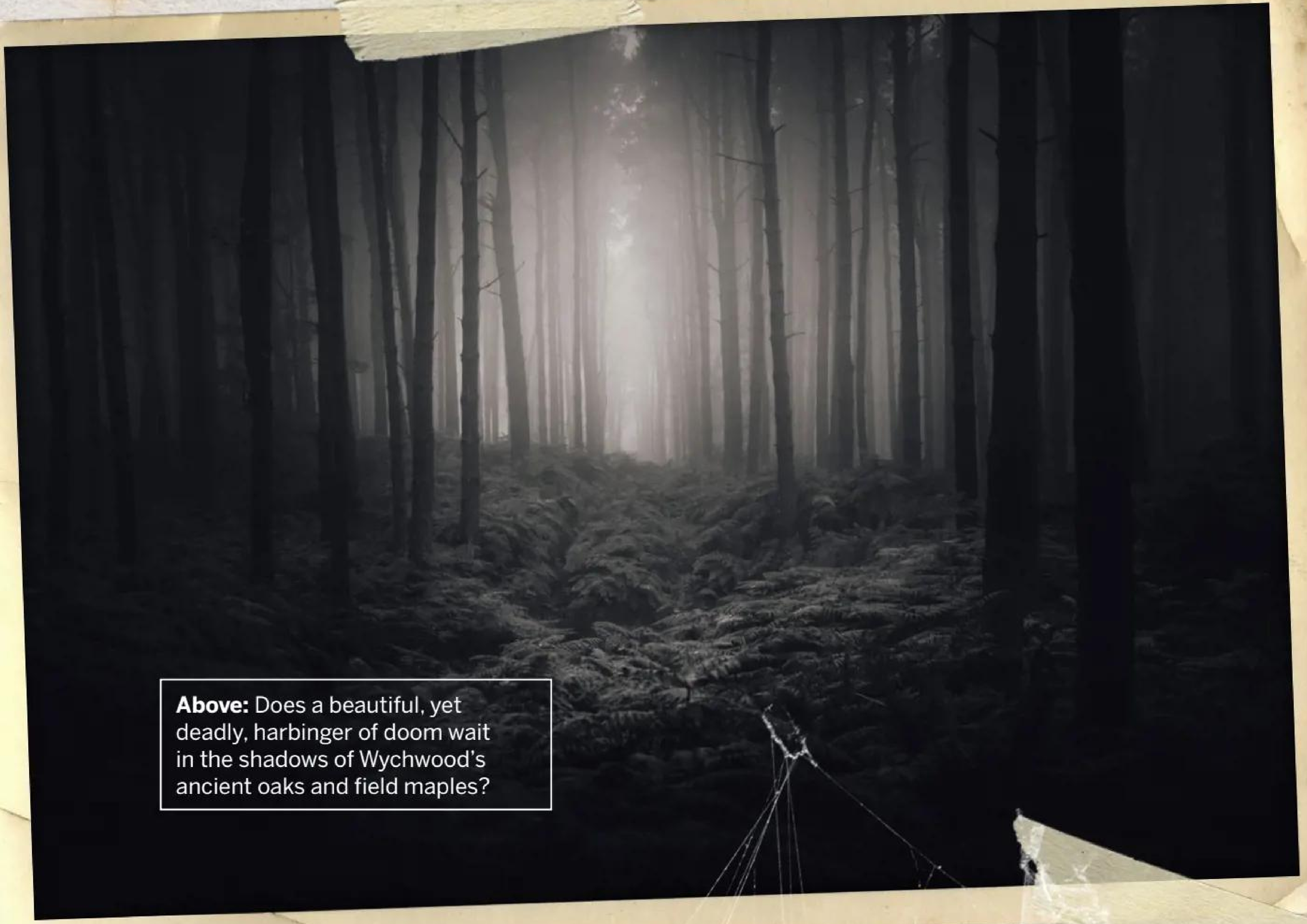
This Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is also a paranormal hotspot. In 2007, werewolves were reportedly sighted here; from 1988 until the early 90s, there were numerous UFO sightings and the area also has its own grey lady – dubbed The Lady of the Chase – a pale figure of a nude woman with hypnotic eyes who instils dread in those she comes across. There have also been accounts of black-eyed children – an urban legend commonly sighted across the US, black-eyed children are a paranormal entity that appear as a pale, black-eyed child between the ages of six and 16. Others say these so-called black-eyed children are the ghosts of the three young girls who were tragically murdered and discovered within the woodlands in the 1960s. More recently, baby dolls were found nailed to some of the trees, adding to the eerie mystery of the area.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

WISTMAN'S WOOD

Location: Devon, England

This wood in Devon's Dartmoor National Park is one of the UK's last few ancient temperate rainforests, sometimes called Atlantic rainforests or Celtic rainforests. A remnant of the ancient woodlands that once covered much of the UK and Ireland, this Site of Special Scientific Interest is also a darkly magical place. Its name comes from the old West Country dialect word 'wisht', which means uncanny, eerie, and even fey. Believed to be the most haunted woodland in the UK, Wisht Hounds are thought to run through the ancient glades: these hellhounds with shadow-coloured coats and red eyes are said to be driven by the Devil, who uses them to hunt down innocent victims. One local man returning from Widdecombe Fair is believed to have once called out to the passing cavalcade, "How goes the hunt?" to which the huntsman replied, "Take that!" and threw him a satchel. Thinking it might be full of meat or even money, the man picked up the bag and hurried home with it – only to find the bloody body of his baby son inside.



Above: Does a beautiful, yet deadly, harbinger of doom wait in the shadows of Wychwood's ancient oaks and field maples?

WYCHWOOD FOREST

Location: Oxfordshire, England

Ancient Wychwood Forest is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, but the former royal hunting ground is also a perfect place for a spot of supernatural sightseeing. It is said that Amy Robsart, the wife of Robert Dudley, haunts the woodland and, should you see her, you are sure to die soon after. Although Amy's death was officially ruled as a 'misfortune', many historians believe Dudley had his wife murdered so that he might marry Queen Elizabeth I. Dudley claimed to have seen Amy in Wychwood ten days before his own demise, reinforcing the legend of her ability to foretell death. If Amy isn't enough to whet your appetite, you might enjoy the phantom coach, pulled by ghostly horses and steered by a headless coachman that crashes through the trees. Locals say the carriage is filled with weeping children and their wailing can be heard long after the apparition has faded.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

SHERWOOD FOREST

Location: Nottinghamshire, England

Everybody knows Sherwood, the secret location of Robin Hood and his band of Merry Men, but this ancient forest is home to far darker entities than the legendary hero in green tights. During the 17th century, witches were drawn to an area known as the 'Bowl', a medieval burial ground within the woodland, and their spirits are said to have never left. Photographs of the area regularly capture inexplicable mist, unseen by the naked eye. A white lady has been seen drifting in between the trees, while the sound of her children laughing eerily reverberates across the site. Hooded figures, thought to be Pagan worshippers of ancient gods, are regularly seen walking silently along the wood-lined paths before disappearing into the shadows.

More recently, during WWII, the forest was used as the site of a prisoner of war camp and military training area and the sound of gunfire is often heard, terrifying both visitors and the wildlife.

Above: In 2022, ghost hunters claimed to have seen a hooded figure, possibly one of the Merry Men, lurking in the forest

Below: Those that unwisely choose to camp in the woods have woken up in the night to find the poltergeist has moved all of their belonging

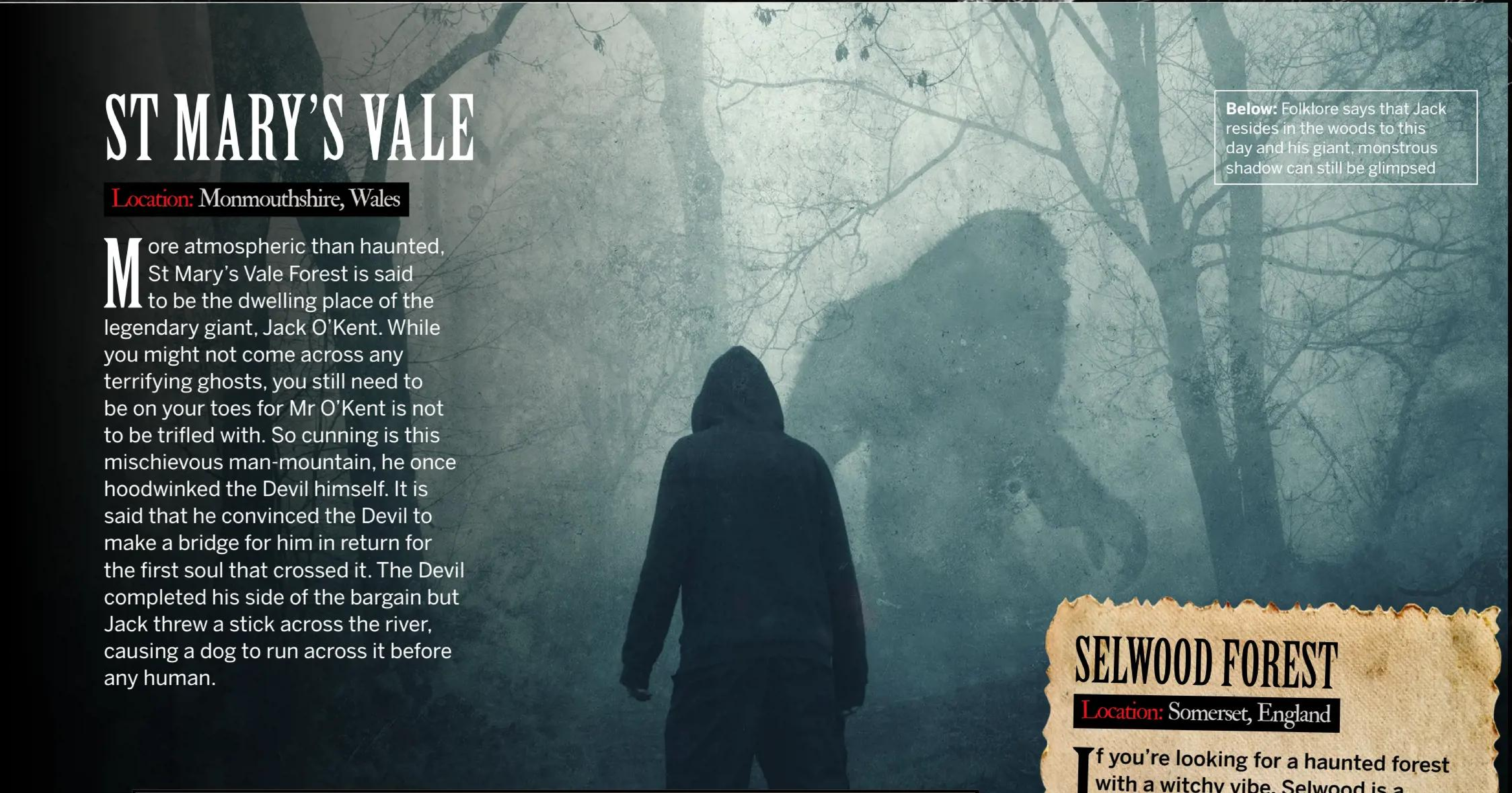
PEMBREY WOODS

Location: Carmarthenshire, Wales

This deliciously spooky place is a smorgasbord of supernatural delights. Dead airmen have been seen staggering through the trees, thanks to a former RAF airfield located nearby where a number of planes crashed during the war. Meanwhile, beautifully dressed Cavaliers are known to frequent the pathways after dark. Creepier still, visitors have claimed to witness hideously deformed entities while out enjoying the fresh air.

However, the scariest spectres are the 'Hatchet Men of Pembrey', the wicked spirits of a band of wreckers who lured ships onto the rocks, stole the cargo and slaughtered any survivors. Both the bloodied sailors and the evil Hatchet Men themselves are thought to roam the shadowy forest. The eerie lights of their ghostly 'luring lamps' have been spotted flickering in the darkness along the shoreline and deep within the forest itself.

A poltergeist is said to haunt the forest, hiding in the trees, waiting for passersby so he can grab their ankles and pull them to the floor. Tourists have hit the ground with a mouthful of pine needles, only to be told they were victim to the Pembrey Poltergeist.

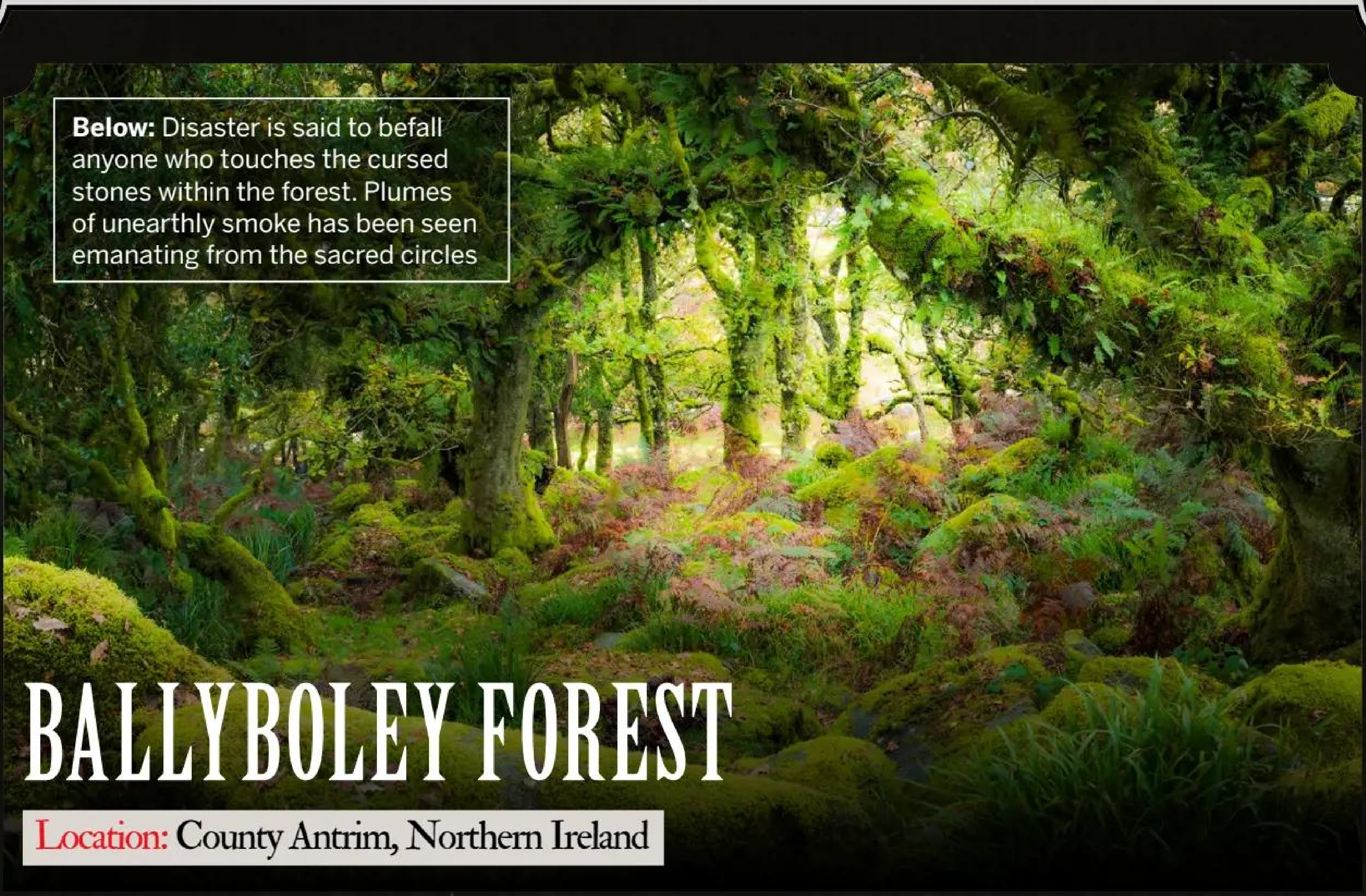


Below: Folklore says that Jack resides in the woods to this day and his giant, monstrous shadow can still be glimpsed

ST MARY'S VALE

Location: Monmouthshire, Wales

More atmospheric than haunted, St Mary's Vale Forest is said to be the dwelling place of the legendary giant, Jack O'Kent. While you might not come across any terrifying ghosts, you still need to be on your toes for Mr O'Kent is not to be trifled with. So cunning is this mischievous man-mountain, he once hoodwinked the Devil himself. It is said that he convinced the Devil to make a bridge for him in return for the first soul that crossed it. The Devil completed his side of the bargain but Jack threw a stick across the river, causing a dog to run across it before any human.



Below: Disaster is said to befall anyone who touches the cursed stones within the forest. Plumes of unearthly smoke has been seen emanating from the sacred circles

BALLYBOLEY FOREST

Location: County Antrim, Northern Ireland

It is said that the spirits of the ancient Druids have never left the forest of Ballyboley, shrouding the land in a magical caul, capturing the essence of centuries of Pagan rituals. Mysterious occurrences and chilling otherworldly encounters are regularly reported. Echoing disembodied voices calling from the shadows are often accompanied by a sudden drop in temperature, while others have witnessed mysterious pockets of mist that hover over the path before disappearing. Footsteps are regularly reported but, on turning to look behind them, the path is empty. Some have even claimed to have been chased out of the forest by dark figures, dressed in long, hooded robes.

Perhaps the most terrifying aspect concerns the frequent accounts of 'time warping'. For centuries people have claimed to enter the forest and lose time while in the trees, believing they have only been gone for an hour when, in reality, they have been away for an entire day, sometimes longer.

SELWOOD FOREST

Location: Somerset, England

If you're looking for a haunted forest with a witchy vibe, Selwood is a perfect location, particularly the heart of the forest, commonly known as the 'Selwood Triangle', due to the regularity of mysterious occurrences taking place in the area. Just like the more famous 'Bermuda Triangle', on reaching the centre of Selwood, travellers are often inexplicably discombobulated, losing their sense of direction and becoming hopelessly lost. Locals say the place is merely playing tricks on you and the witch spirits, known to reside here, mean no real harm. They're just having a little fun at your expense.

Many witchcraft practices were said to have taken place in Selwood across the 17th century, resulting in 24 individuals being accused during a countywide witch-hunt. Folklore tells of the Selwood Coven that still haunts the dark recesses of the woodland to this day and, while they show no evil intentions by day, you are advised not to try your luck at night when their games may not be quite so playful.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

THE LORE OF THE LANDSCAPE

Whether it's hairy hands, witches, devil dogs or warring giants, the landscape of the United Kingdom is rich in folklore and legend

SALISBURY PLAIN

Location: Wiltshire, England

Stonehenge, the mysterious stone circle erected around 2500 BCE (see page 77), is undoubtedly Salisbury Plain's claim to fame, but the land has more to offer.

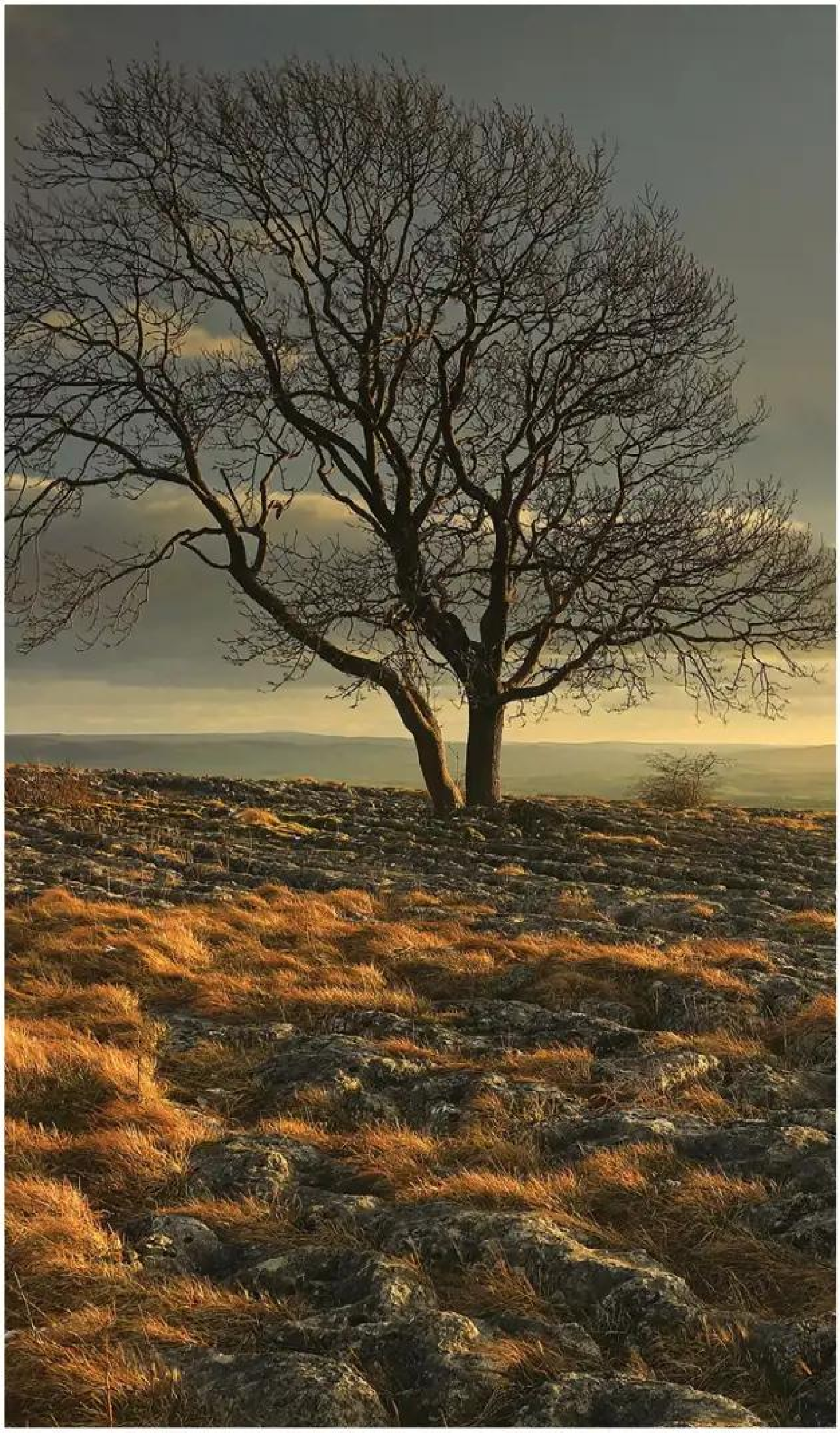
Case in point: the lost village of Imber. Permanently evacuated in 1943 so troops could prepare for D-Day, laughter and chatter echo after dark near the old pub; the scent and warmth of log fires drift on the air; and buildings ring with the clang of Albert Nash's hammer and anvil (he was the village blacksmith who, post-evacuation, died of a broken heart).

Further afield, the 'Flying Highwayman', Thomas Boulter, who was hung in the 1770s, rides across the Plain before vanishing into the mist. In Salisbury Cathedral, the noose that hung Lord Stourton sometimes reappears over his grave, where it was left after his execution, and whenever a bishop of Salisbury is dying (officially documented in 1911), white, dazzling, albatross-like birds fly without flapping their wings or perch on the cathedral's spire. Not the most horrific phantoms, but they do make you want to explore the history of Salisbury Plain.

PENDLE HILL

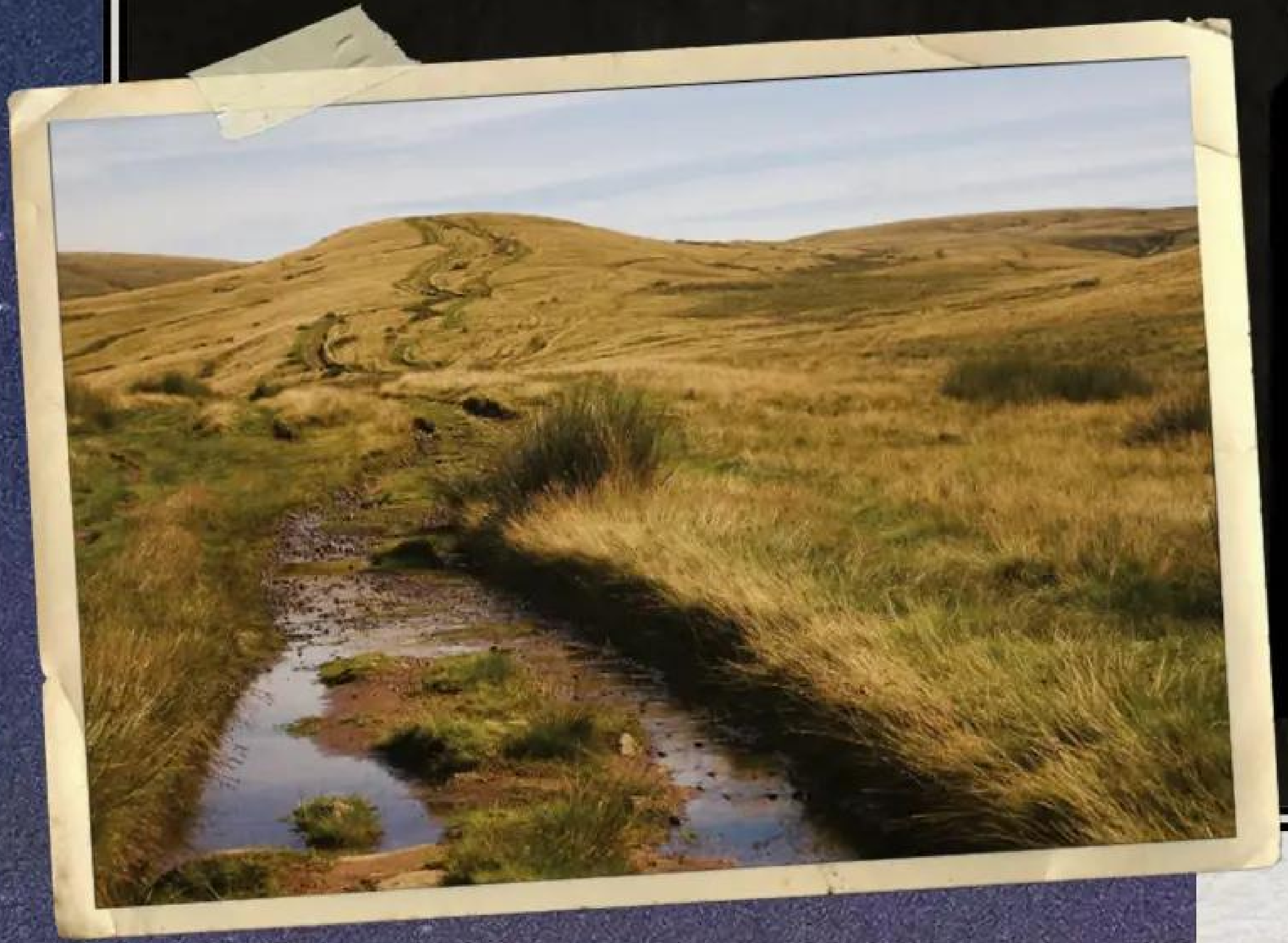
Location: Lancashire, England

Once home to wild boar, ancient woodland and wolves, now Pendle Hill is steeped in mystery, bewitched by the legacy of 1612. In the 17th century, Europe was in the claws of witch-hunting mania, and in England, this peaked in Pendle. In 1612, Alison Device confessed to asking the Devil to curse a pedlar, and members of her family and its rivals were rounded up and taken to trial. All but one were found guilty of murder by sorcery, plus a baloney plot to blow up Lancaster Castle, and hanged. Boasting about meeting the Devil in a quarry won't have helped, but the 'witches' were most likely wrongly convicted due to reputation wars between the Chattoxes and Demdikes, which revolved around healing and/or black magic. They haunt the villages in the shadow of Pendle Hill, where visitors report sudden intense rage, ghostly whispers, unexplainable scratches, and even being choked, while locals dread the apparitions darting around the hill at night.



JAMES I, A DISCIPLE OF BIAS

Although England held witch trials for 300 years, only 500 'witches' were hanged, making the Pendle 11 a mammoth 2% at once. At the time, James I, who loathed witchcraft, was on the throne. He made the Witchcraft Act of 1604 one of his first laws.



CRANK CAVERNS

Location: St Helens, Merseyside, England

Once a quarry and later a WW2 ammunition storage facility, Crank Caverns is reputed to contain not only an abandoned church and a deep labyrinth, but also a dwarven race who chase visitors from their subterranean home. Locals also warn visitors of the Crank Rabbit, a white apparition who appears to foretell the death of any who are unfortunate enough to encounter it. Though now closed to visitors, mysterious sounds from deep within the earth at Crank Caverns have led to tales of ghosts and even covens, where witches carry out black magic rituals by night.

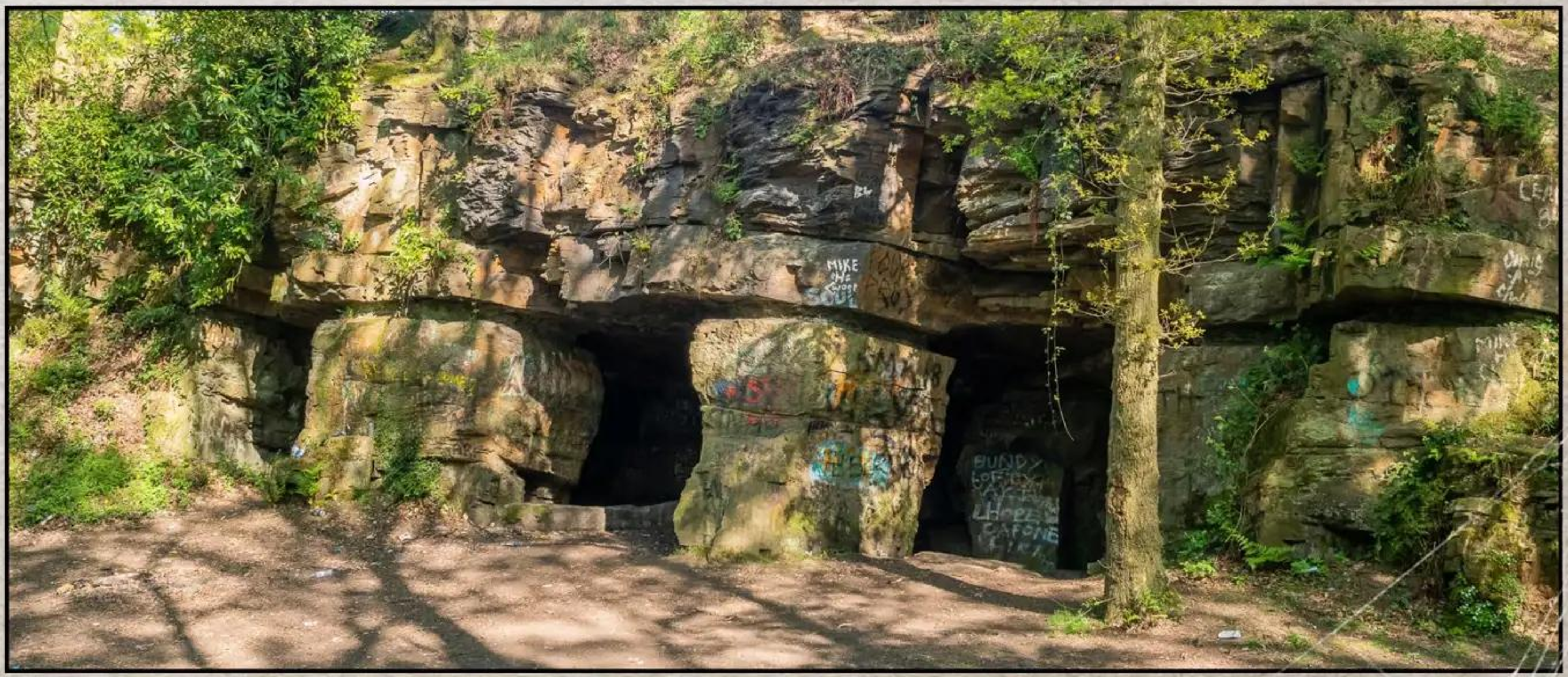


Image source: Getty; Alamy.

BODMIN MOOR

Location: Cornwall, England, UK

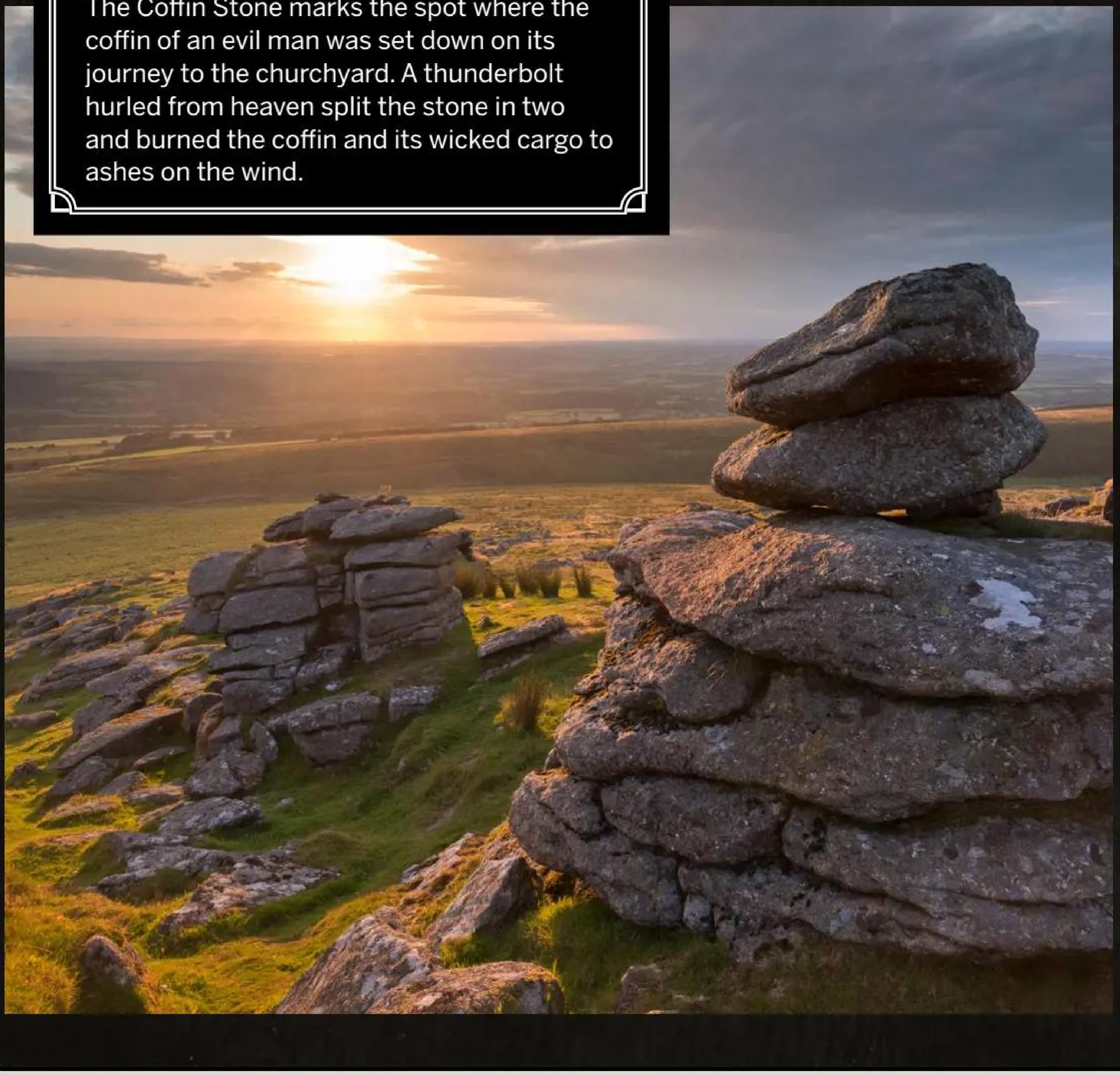
Bleak, heather-strewn, and swamped with bogs, Bodmin Moor commands fear and awe in equal amounts. Its history and legends include Bronze Age hut circles and cairns, the mighty Giant's House of Trethevy Quoit, and the precarious Cheesewring, allegedly the result of a struggle between giants and saints. In 1844, 18-year-old servant Charlotte Dymond was found near the stream below Rough Tor, her jealous suitor allegedly having slit her throat, and today she roams the moor in her Sunday best. The Beast of Bodmin Moor also can't be forgotten, or it might come for your livestock. Locals swear the large, panther-like creature exists, with 60 sightings/slayings since the 1970s. More chilling is Jan Tregeagle, who sold his soul to Satan for riches. After being brought back from the dead, he refused to go to Hell, torturing the village with his pleas for mercy. The churchmen felt compelled to help, and so bound him to Dozmary Pool, setting him a task to keep him busy until Judgement Day, so he could escape the clutches of hellhounds and try to redeem himself.

DOZMARY POOL, BURSTING WITH MYTH

A small lake on Bodmin Moor, Dozmary Pool harbours the Old Storm Woman, a ghostly moorland mermaid who whips the water into wind before flinging it out across the moor. Dozmary is also where Tregeagle howls the loudest, bound to empty the bottomless pool with a leaky limpet shell.

A JUDGEMENT FROM HEAVEN

The Coffin Stone marks the spot where the coffin of an evil man was set down on its journey to the churchyard. A thunderbolt hurled from heaven split the stone in two and burned the coffin and its wicked cargo to ashes on the wind.



DARTMOOR

Location: Devon, England

The enchanting and mysterious Dartmoor landscape is famed as home to ghosts, pixies, witches and more. Don't go near King's Bridge in Ashburton after a few drinks, because the disapproving sprite known as Cutty Dyer doesn't like drunks. He's rumoured to jump out from beneath the bridge, cut his victim's throat and drink their blood. Fans of Sherlock Holmes won't want to miss the grave of Squire Cabell in Buckfastleigh. After the death of the wicked 17th-century squire, his phantom led a pack of howling hounds across the moor, until his coffin was entombed to keep his spirit at bay. The legend of Squire Cabell supposedly inspired the *Hound of the Baskervilles*. And drivers should take care on Hairy Hands Bridge, where two hairy hands are reputed to grab steering wheels and force terrified travellers to drive to their doom.

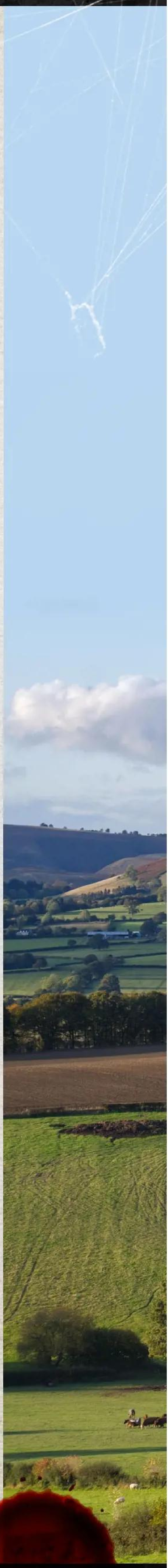
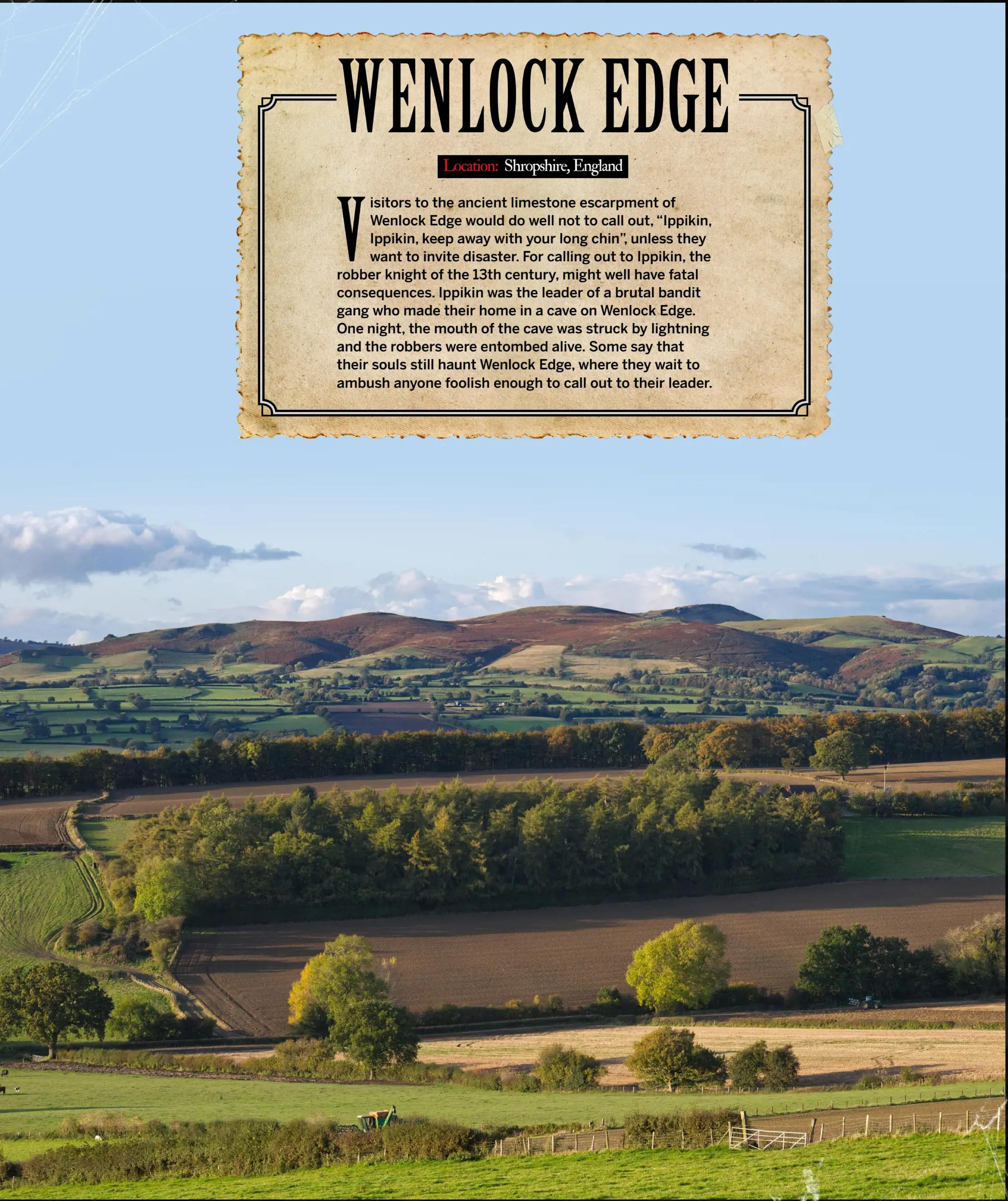


Image source: Getty; Alamy

WENLOCK EDGE

Location: Shropshire, England

Visitors to the ancient limestone escarpment of Wenlock Edge would do well not to call out, "Ippikin, Ippikin, keep away with your long chin", unless they want to invite disaster. For calling out to Ippikin, the robber knight of the 13th century, might well have fatal consequences. Ippikin was the leader of a brutal bandit gang who made their home in a cave on Wenlock Edge. One night, the mouth of the cave was struck by lightning and the robbers were entombed alive. Some say that their souls still haunt Wenlock Edge, where they wait to ambush anyone foolish enough to call out to their leader.



GIANT'S CAUSEWAY

Location: County Antrim, Northern Ireland

In ancient times, an Irish giant named Finn McCool built a causeway across the Irish Sea to do battle with his foe, Scottish giant Benandonner. However, when Finn reached Scotland and saw the size of Benandonner, he fled back to Ireland, losing a boot in his haste. Benandonner gave chase but Finn's quick-thinking wife convinced him that Finn was just a child, while his father was even bigger. Benandonner turned tail and ran for Scotland, tearing up the path behind him. The remains of the path became the Giant's Causeway, and Finn's fossilised boot can be seen at Port Noffer ('bay of the giant').

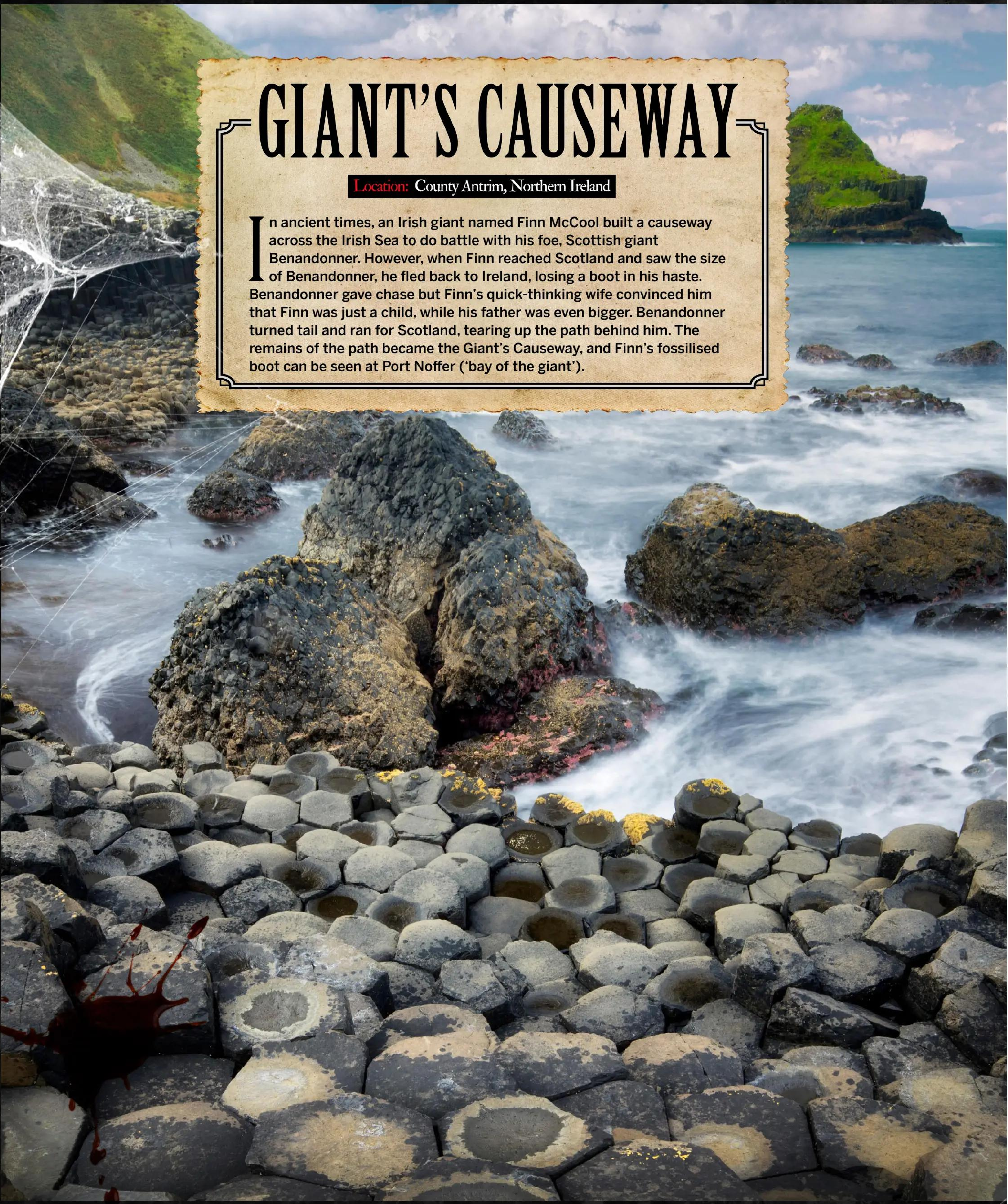
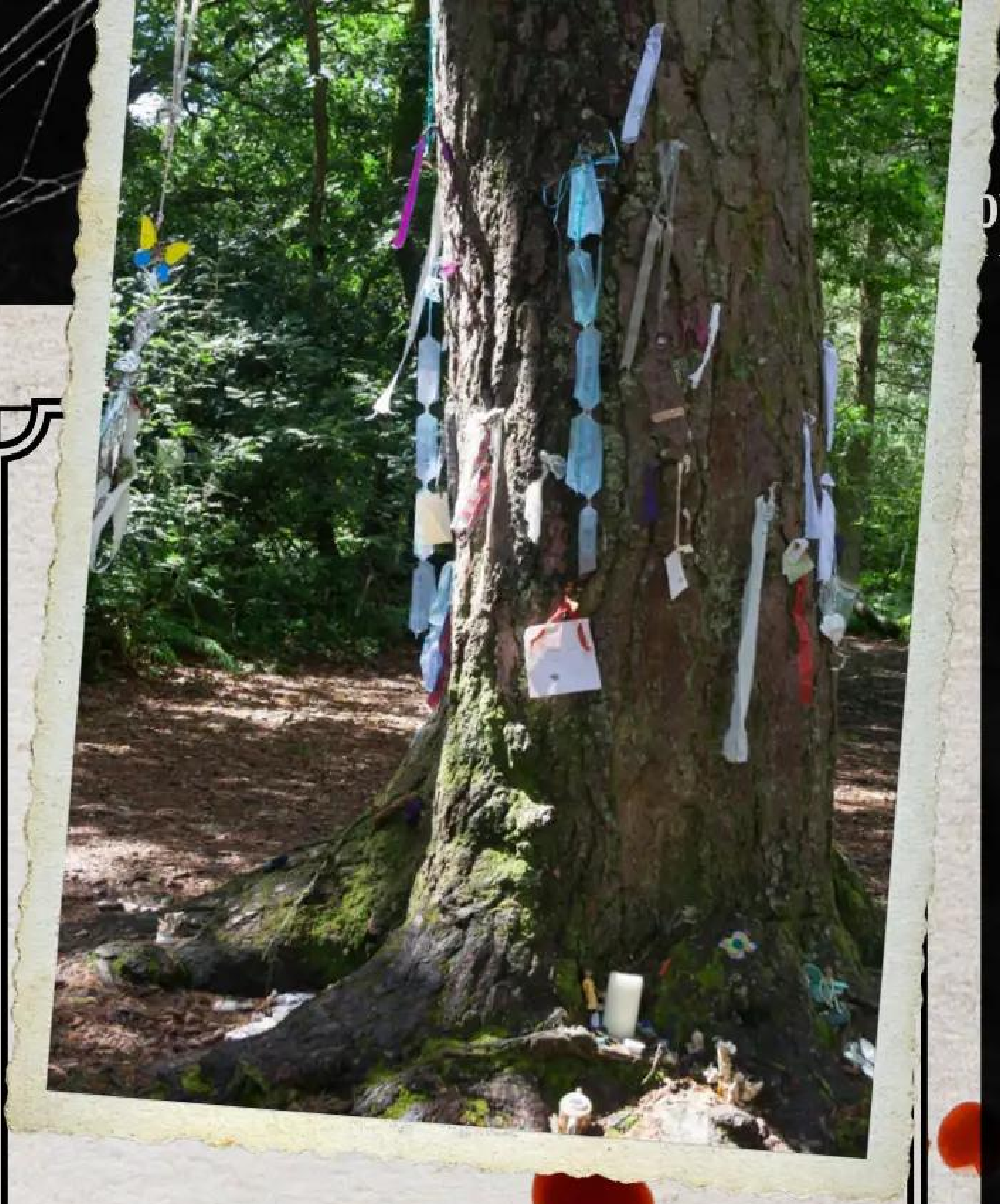


Image source: Getty; Alamy

EYNHALLOW

Location: Orkney, Scotland

The uninhabited island of Eynhallow is separated from the mainland by Eynhallow Sound. Often shrouded by a thick fog, according to myth the island disappears from view to those who are seeking it and conceals a portal to Hildaland, the kingdom of an ancient amphibious race known as the Finn Folk. Travellers to Eynhallow would do well to leave their animals at home, as legends claim that only animals born on Eynhallow can survive there. In fact, a handful of earth from the island was often buried in the foundation of new homes elsewhere, in the belief that rodents would be unable to survive in the house thanks to the magical soil beneath.



DOON HILL

Location: Aberfoyle, Scotland

On the top of Doon Hill is an ancient Scots pine tree, beneath which the entry to the fairy realm is reputed to be situated. In the 17th century a local man, Reverend Robert Kirk, angered the fairies by writing a book entitled *The Secret Commonwealth*, in which he revealed their existence and details of their customs, traditions and behaviour. In 1691 Reverend Kirk took a moonlit walk on the hill, where he died. Local legend has it that the unfortunate reverend's spirit was taken by the fairies and imprisoned in the Scots pine for eternity. Today, people still leave offerings at the tree, hoping to placate the fairies and win their favour.

SLIEVE GULLION

Location: County Armagh, Northern Ireland

The mountain of Slieve Gullion is reputed to have been the home of Culaan, a smith who invited King Conchobar mac Nessa to dine with him. Conchobar invited a young man named Sétanta to join them, but upon his arrival, Sétanta was attacked by Culaan's fearsome guard dog. After killing the dog, a remorseful Sétanta promised to serve as a guard for Culann until he had raised a replacement dog. From then on he took the name Cú Chulainn, 'Culann's Hound', beginning his career as a legendary hero. The mountain is also where sisters Áine and Milucra sought giant Finn McCool. Knowing that Áine wouldn't marry a man with grey hair, Milucra enchanted the lake atop the mountain so anyone who swam in it would instantly age. After convincing Finn to retrieve a gold ring from the lake, he emerged as an old man with white hair. Though she undid the enchantment, his hair never returned to its natural colour.

SNOWDON

Location: Snowdonia, North Wales

Legend has it that Snowdon is where King Arthur felled the giant Rhita Gawr. Arthur entombed the giant beneath rocks that became the peak of the mountain and some believe Arthur's knights are slumbering beneath that very summit, waiting to return. Snowden was also home to the witch Canthrig Bwt, who emerged from her home in the Llanberis Pass to dine on local children. Villagers eventually chopped off her head. The Welsh Dragon on the national flag finds its origins in Snowdonia, where Celtic King Vortigern found that his castles kept tumbling down. He was informed he was building atop an underground lake, home to a red dragon and a white dragon. The king dug down and found the two dragons, who immediately engaged in a battle to the death. The red dragon claimed the victory and became the symbol of Vortigern and, eventually, Wales itself.

CADAIR IDRIS

Location: Gwynned, Wales

Cadair Idris ('Idris's Chair') was the home of the philosophical giant, Idris, who used its summit as his throne. From there he would look out over his kingdom by day and observe the stars by night. It is also the favourite hunting spot of Gwyn ap Nudd, king of the Welsh Otherworld. He hunted across the slopes of Cadair Idris with his pack of fearsome dogs, whose howling brought death to all who heard it. Before dawn broke, legend has it, the unfortunate souls would be carried away to the otherworld by the dogs.

RATHLIN ISLAND

Location: County Antrim, Northern Ireland

In 1306, Robert the Bruce took refuge on Rathlin Island after being driven from Scotland by King Edward I of Scotland. He took refuge in the cave now known as Bruce's Cave, where he looked out over the sea towards his homeland. As Robert licked his wounds he watched a spider struggling to spin its web. The spider persevered until, from a single silken thread, it wove an impressive cobweb. Inspired by the spider's dedication to its task and its tenacity, Robert raised an army and returned to Scotland, where he won back his crown.

THE CHILDREN OF LIR

As you cross the Sea of Moyle to Rathlin Island, spare a thought for the Children of Lir, whose evil stepmother's curse turned them into swans. The sound of a church bell returned them to human form, but their stepmother was condemned to eternity as a demon, whose tormented howls can still be heard in the island's storm winds.

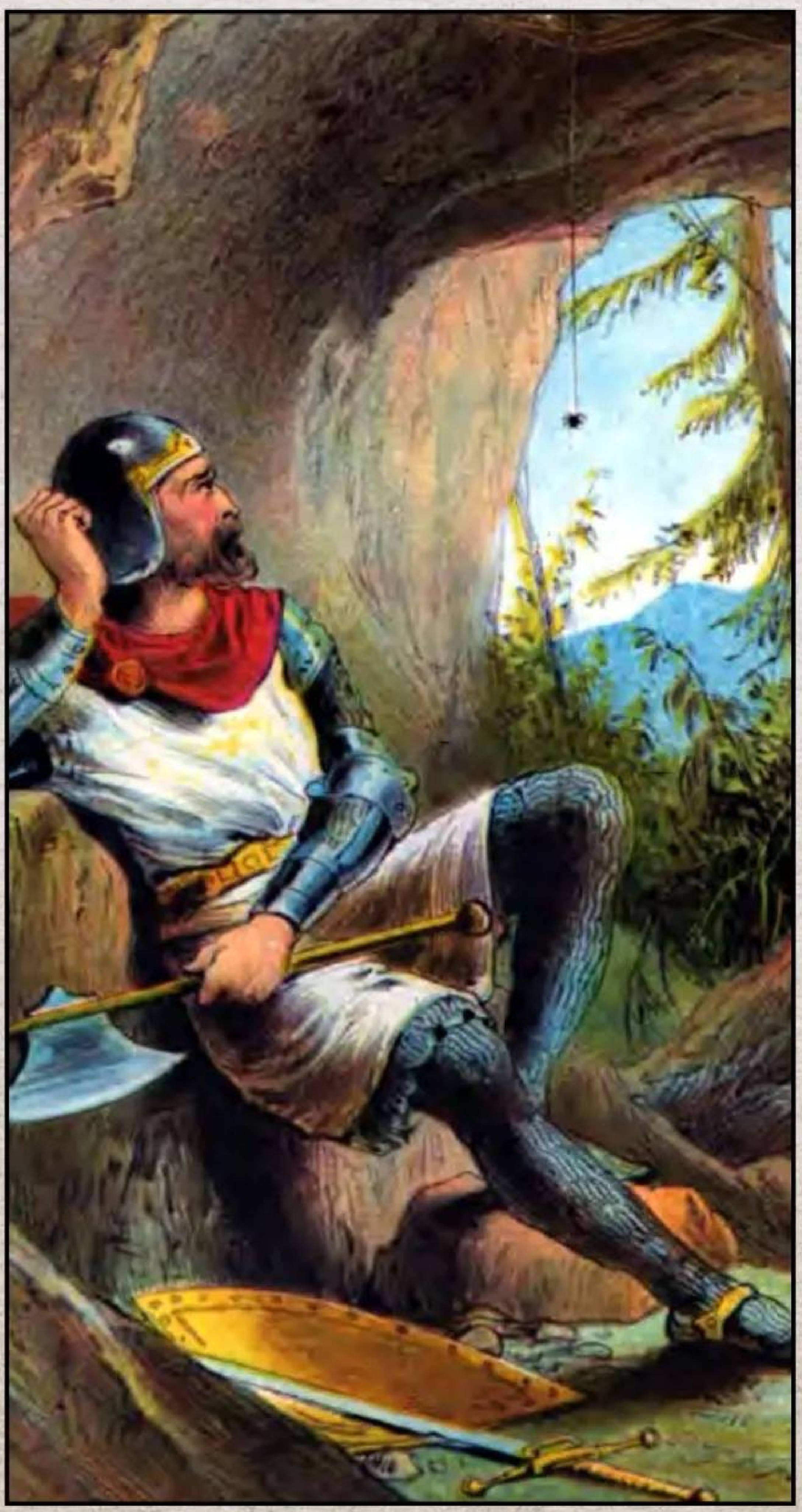


Image source: Getty; Alamy; Source: Wikipedia Commons / Public Domain

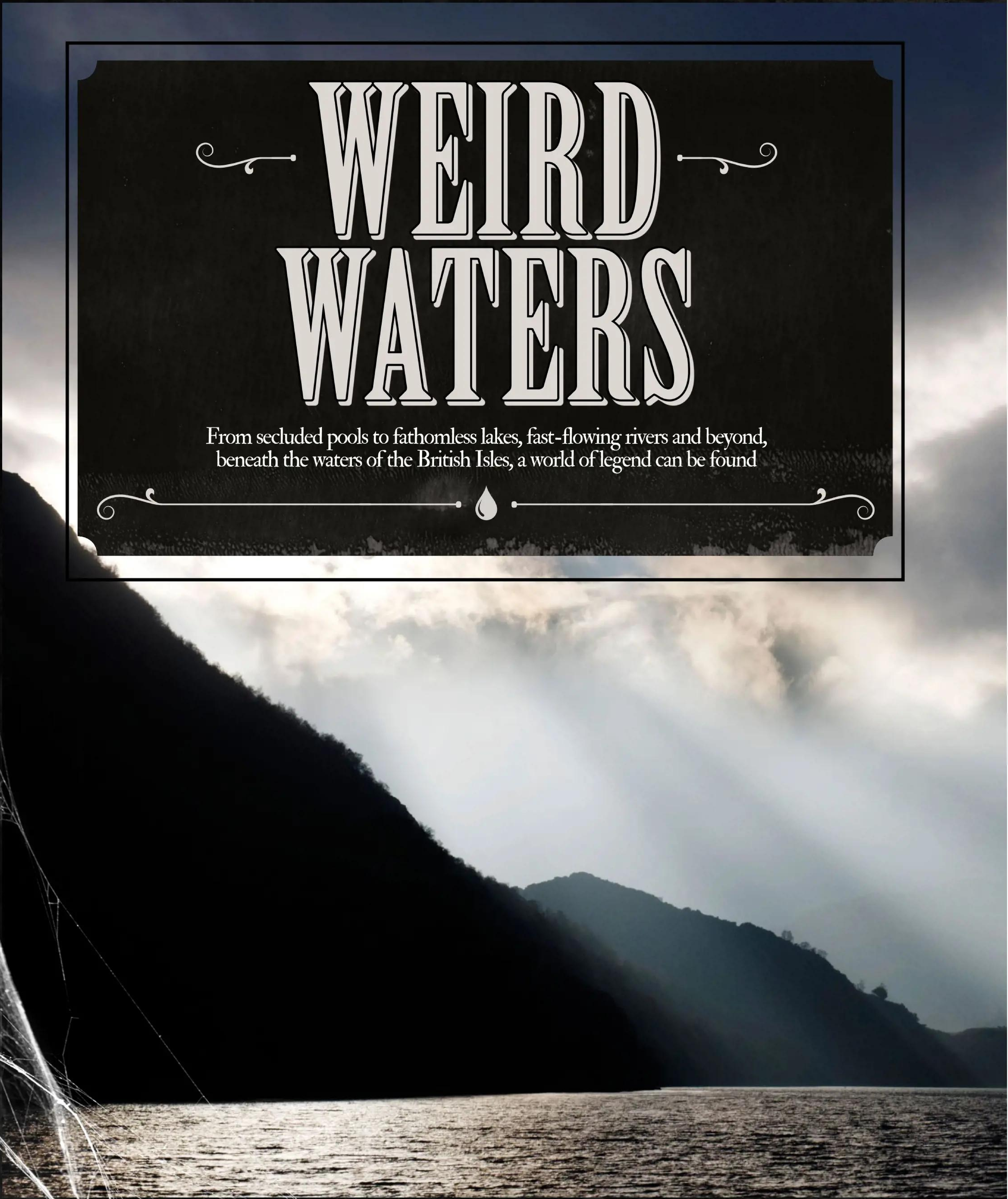
TWMBARLWM

Location: Caerphilly, South Wales

Atop Twmbarlwm rests the giant Bran, a Silurian chieftain who is waiting to be summoned to the defence of his Welsh homeland. Bran had lived an eventful life, including losing his head in a battle with the Irish king to whom his sister had been unwillingly married. After being injured, Bran told his followers to cut off his head and carry it with them; it continued to speak and offer advice for seven years. Bran's head was buried in London on the spot where the Tower of London now stands, facing in the direction of France in order to ward off attackers. Meanwhile on Twmbarlwm, Bran guards a hidden cache of treasure that is rumoured to be protected by a swarm of bees. In the 1980s, local council workers carrying out repairs to Twmbarlwm were attacked by thousands of bees, which chased them back to their van and away into town.

WEIRD WATERS

From secluded pools to fathomless lakes, fast-flowing rivers and beyond, beneath the waters of the British Isles, a world of legend can be found



ST WINEFRIDE'S WELL

Location: Flintshire, Wales

The Reformation, with its suspicion of popish practices, killed off the tradition of pilgrimage almost everywhere in England. One place where pilgrimage survived through centuries of Catholic persecution was St Winefride's Well in Wales. According to legend, the well itself sprung up where Winefride's head struck the ground when her would-be rapist, frustrated by Winefride's attempts to escape him, struck off her head with his sword. The rapist himself fell dead while the prayers of St Beuno brought Winefride back to life, unscathed apart from a thin white scar line around her neck.

The well became a place of pilgrimage, with many medieval English kings, including Richard II and Henry IV, visiting the holy well, attracted both by its aura of sanctity and the miraculous healing properties associated with its water. Despite various attempts to suppress pilgrimages after the Reformation, Catholics – local and from further afield – continued to visit the shrine. Indeed, such was its reputation for healing that many Protestants also visited the well to take the waters.

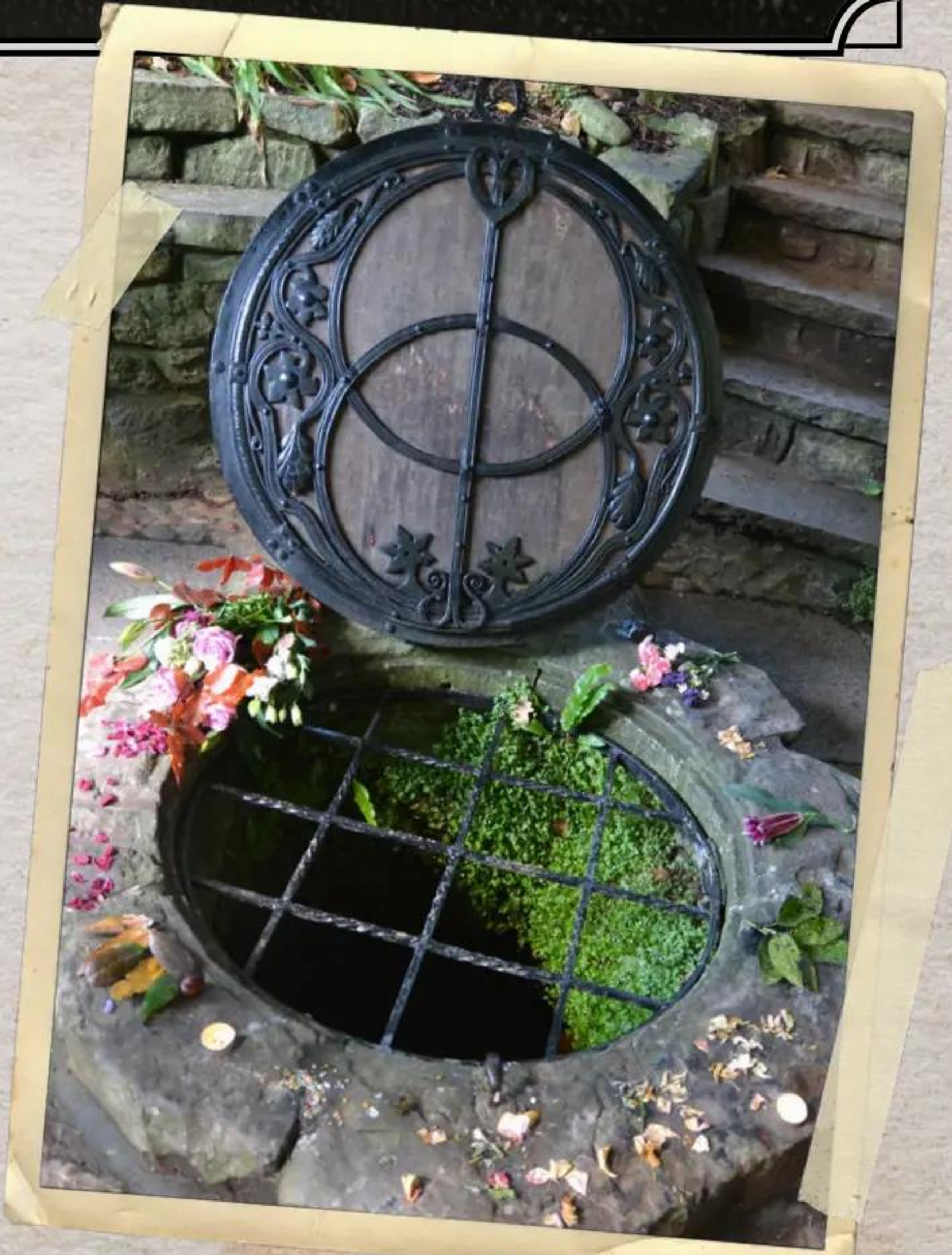
By the 17th century, medicinal spas had become popular around the country, so many people visited because of the restorative effects of the water's mineral content, rather than because of its spiritual associations.

However, miracles continued to occur at the well, the most famous being the 1805 healing of Winefrid White from a left-side paralysis that had resulted in an inability to walk. People continue to bathe in the well, traditionally immersing themselves three times. If you want to try the waters, check in advance to discover the times when bathing is permitted; otherwise well water is always available from a tap.

> "Miracles continued to occur at the well, the most famous being the 1805 healing of Winefrid White from a left-side paralysis"

CHALICE WELL

Location: Glastonbury, Somerset, England



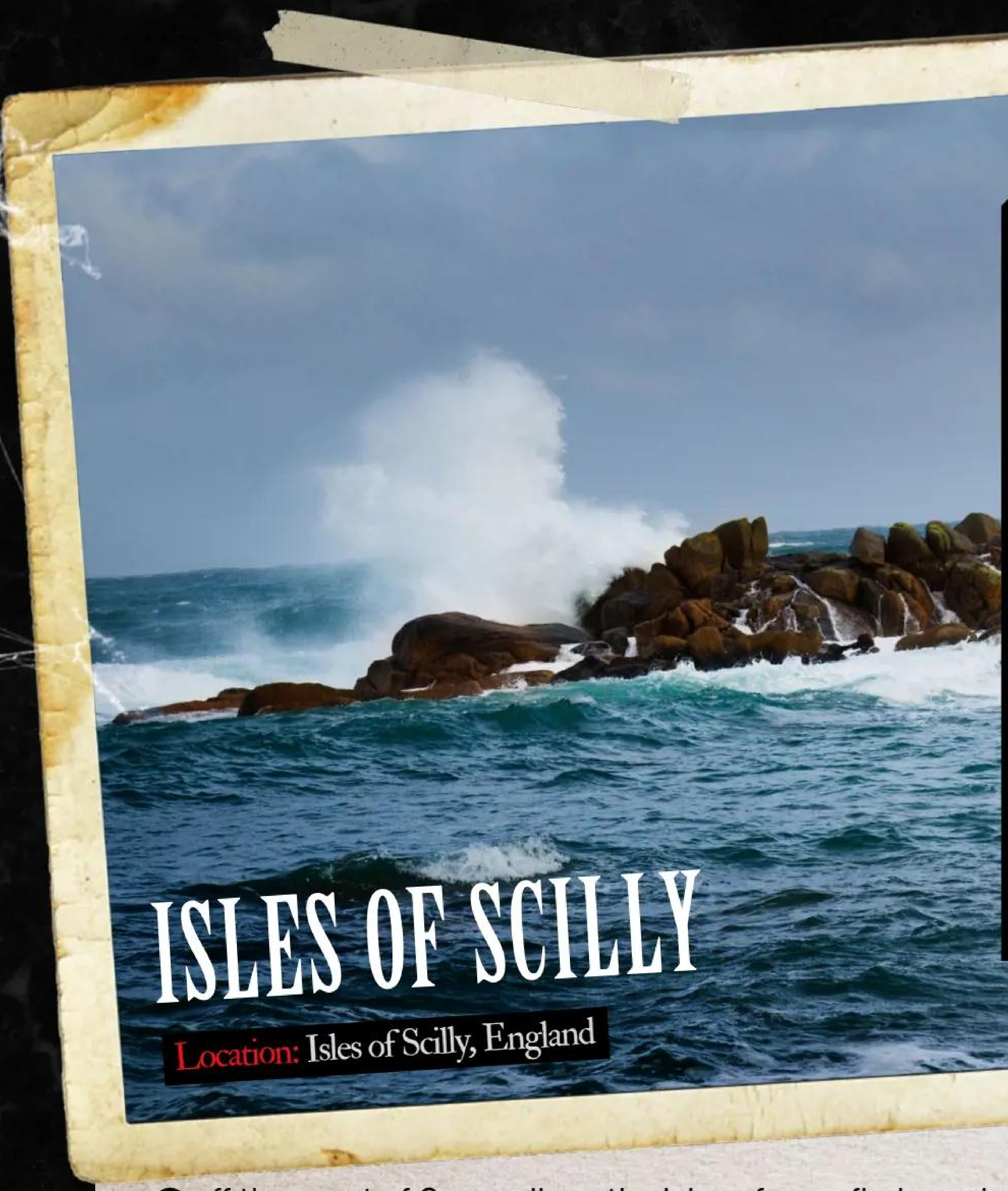
Glastonbury (see page 72) is one of the most numinous sites in Britain, so it's appropriate that it should also have a holy well. The Chalice Well rises from Chalice Hill, near Glastonbury Tor and is known as the Red Spring, thanks to the reddish hue of the waters (tinged by their iron oxide content) which are believed to have therapeutic healing properties.

The well produces 25,000 gallons (110,000 litres) of water each day and has reputedly never run dry, even during the drought years of 1921-22. Archaeologists have found evidence of human use of the well dating back 2,000 years.

Chalice Well is intimately connected with the legends that surround Glastonbury. According to these, Joseph of Arimathea visited Britain with a young Jesus (there were trade routes connecting the tin mines of Cornwall with the Mediterranean). After Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection, legend tells that Joseph returned to Britain, bearing the Holy Grail, which he deposited at Glastonbury under the well. Blood that Joseph had collected from Jesus as he hung upon the cross flowed into the water, thus giving the water its distinctive red colour.

The garden surrounding Chalice Well is open to visitors but check opening times. When closed, well water is available from the Lion's Head fountain on Wellhouse Lane.

Image source: Getty; Alamy;



ISLES OF SCILLY

Location: Isles of Scilly, England

TENNYSON'S ARTHUR

Tennyson adored Scilly and was inspired by the landscape to write his tribute to King Arthur, *Idylls of the King*. His Victorian audience were seduced by the lost Arthurian land of Lyonesse, and King Arthur became forever associated with the Isles of Scilly.

Off the coast of Cornwall are the Isles of Scilly, an archipelago that echoes with memories from ancient history. Local legend claims that the islands were once part of a single landmass called Lyonesse, which was connected to Land's End. King Arthur was supposedly slain there in his last battle against Mordred and as his followers fled, an almighty tempest descended on the earth, killing Mordred and his men. Arthur's followers were saved, though cut off from the mainland as Lyoneese sank beneath the waves. The land on which they stood became their haven and, according to some, the place where King Arthur was laid to rest. That land became the Isles of Scilly.

ST FABER'S WELL

Location: Killydrum, Northern Ireland

The hamlet of Boho and the townland of Killydrum in Northern Ireland have a long history with Saint Faber and her faithful pet deer, which carried her sacred books. After hunting hounds frightened the deer, it fled through the Sillees River and St Faber's books were ruined. She cursed the river to run backwards and to be a place for drowning, rather than fishing. Today the river runs away from the sea, supposedly as a result of the curse. Yet St Faber, who is patron saint of the Sacred Heart Church in Boho, wasn't only about curses. Pilgrims would seek out St Faber's Well, which was famed for the healing properties of its waters. Whether the problem was warts or arthritis, the magical water found in the well was believed to have the power to bring about a cure.

Image source: Wikipedoa Commons / Youngbohemian

MENACUDDLE WELL

Location: St Austell, Cornwall, England

The holy well at Menacuddle can be found in a secluded and peaceful woodland near St Austell in Cornwall. The well dates back to the 15th century and comes from the Old Cornish words 'mened' and 'cuydel', meaning a small wooded hillside. According to local legend, if a visitor drops a pin into the well and makes a wish, the wish will be granted. The well was restored in the early 20th century by Admiral Sir Charles Graves-Sawle as a memorial to his son, who was killed in the Great War. However, Menacuddle Well isn't all that can be found in the woodlands, which are reputedly haunted by ancient spirits. Terrified pilgrims to the well have even been forced to flee by the menacing presence of a huge black beast, which locals claim still haunts the area to this very day.

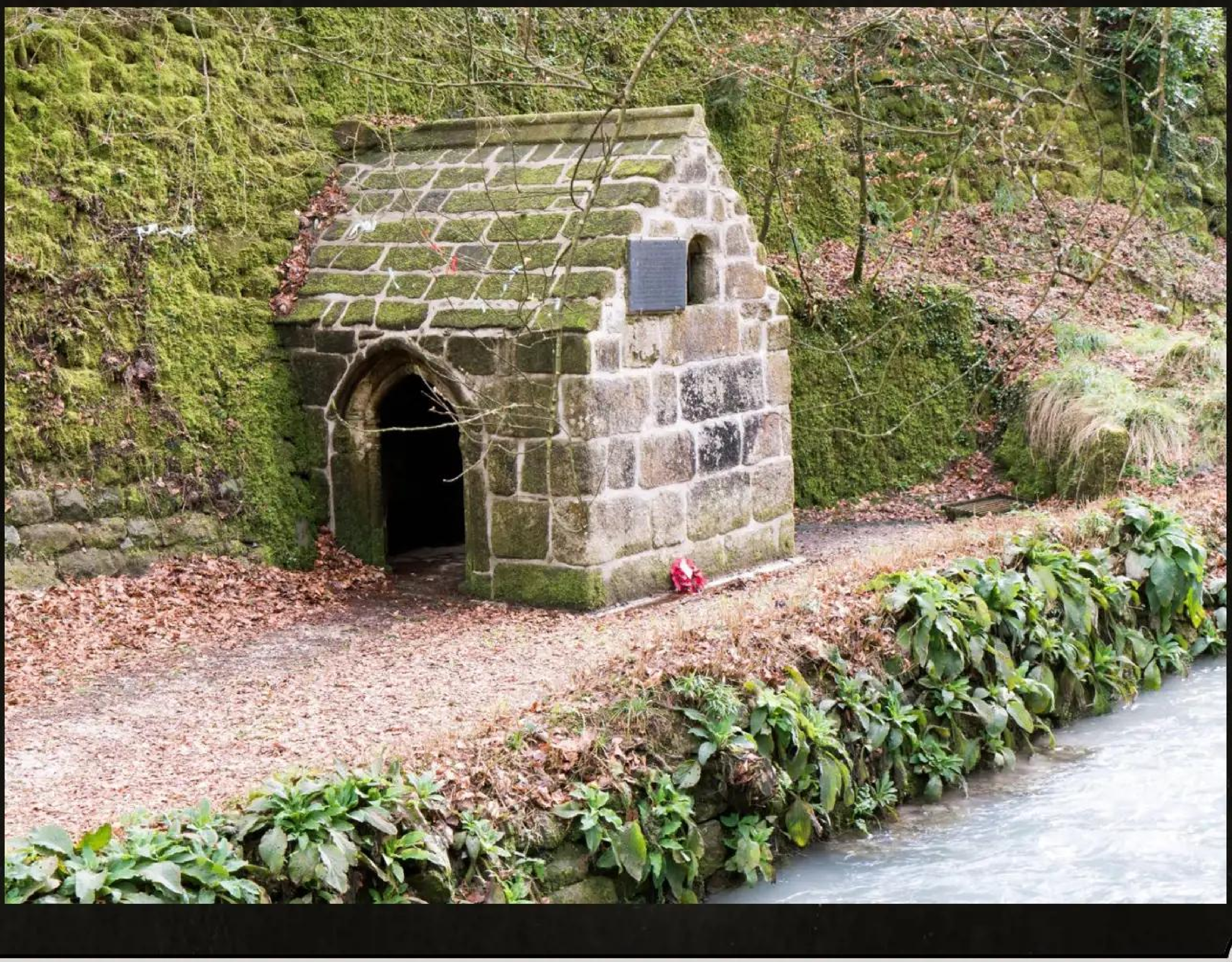


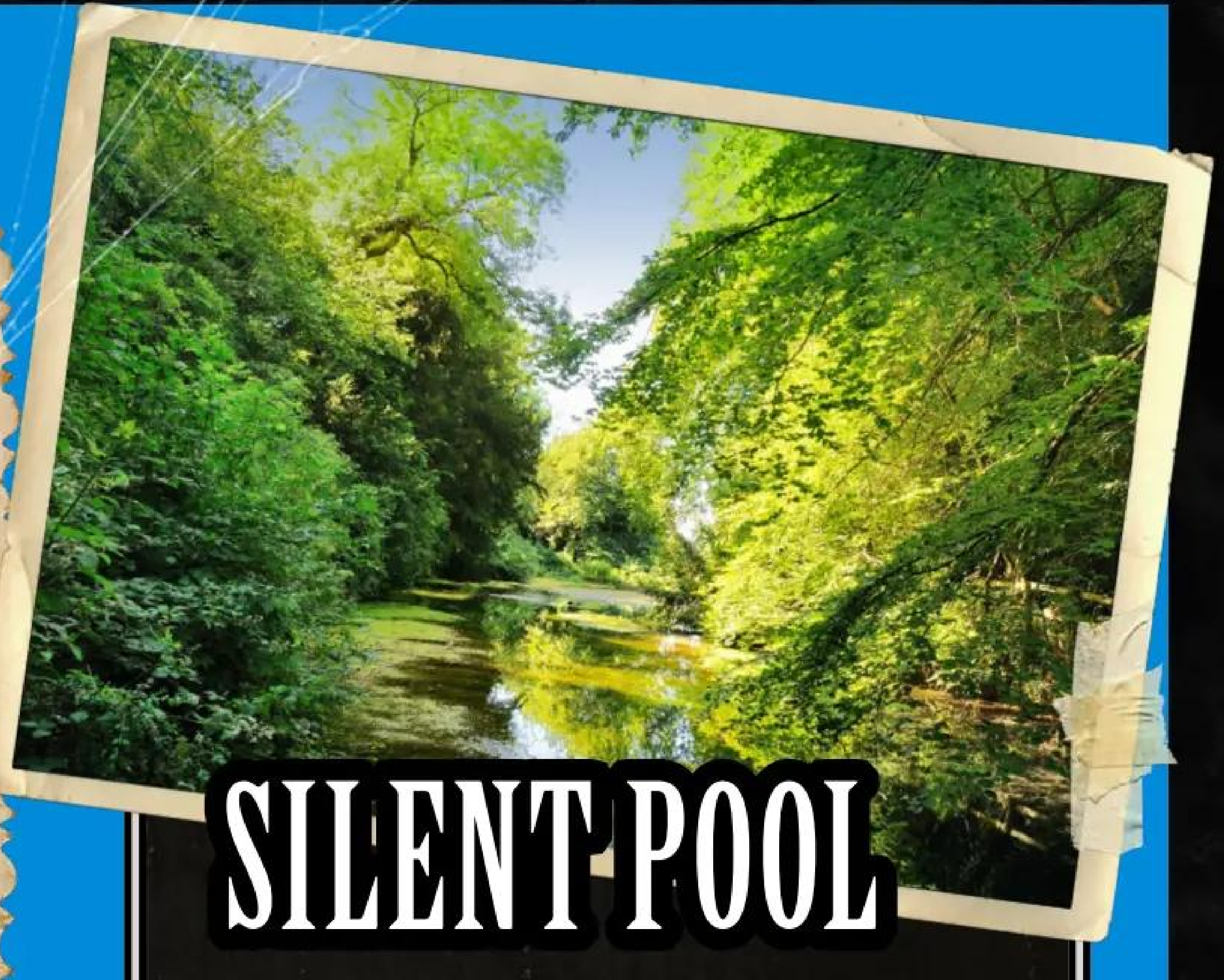
Image source: Getty; Alamy

BALA LAKE

Location: Gwynned, Wales

If you visit Bala Lake (also known as Llyn Tegid), spare a thought for the town that was drowned in its depths. Once upon a time, Bala was home to the wicked local leader Tegid Foel, who hosted a feast for the most rotten people in the land to celebrate the birth of his grandchild. He employed a kind harpist to provide entertainment and as the harpist played, he heard a voice whispering "vengeance will come". The voice belonged to a little bird, who led the harpist out of the palace to a hillside, where it sang him to sleep. When the harpist awoke, the town was submerged beneath a lake that now filled the valley. Floating on the water was his harp, the only evidence of the celebrations where the most evil in the land had met their death. Today the lights of Bala can still be glimpsed beneath the water and the bird's voice can be heard, singing its song of vengeance.

> "Spare a thought for the town that was drowned in its depths"



SILENT POOL

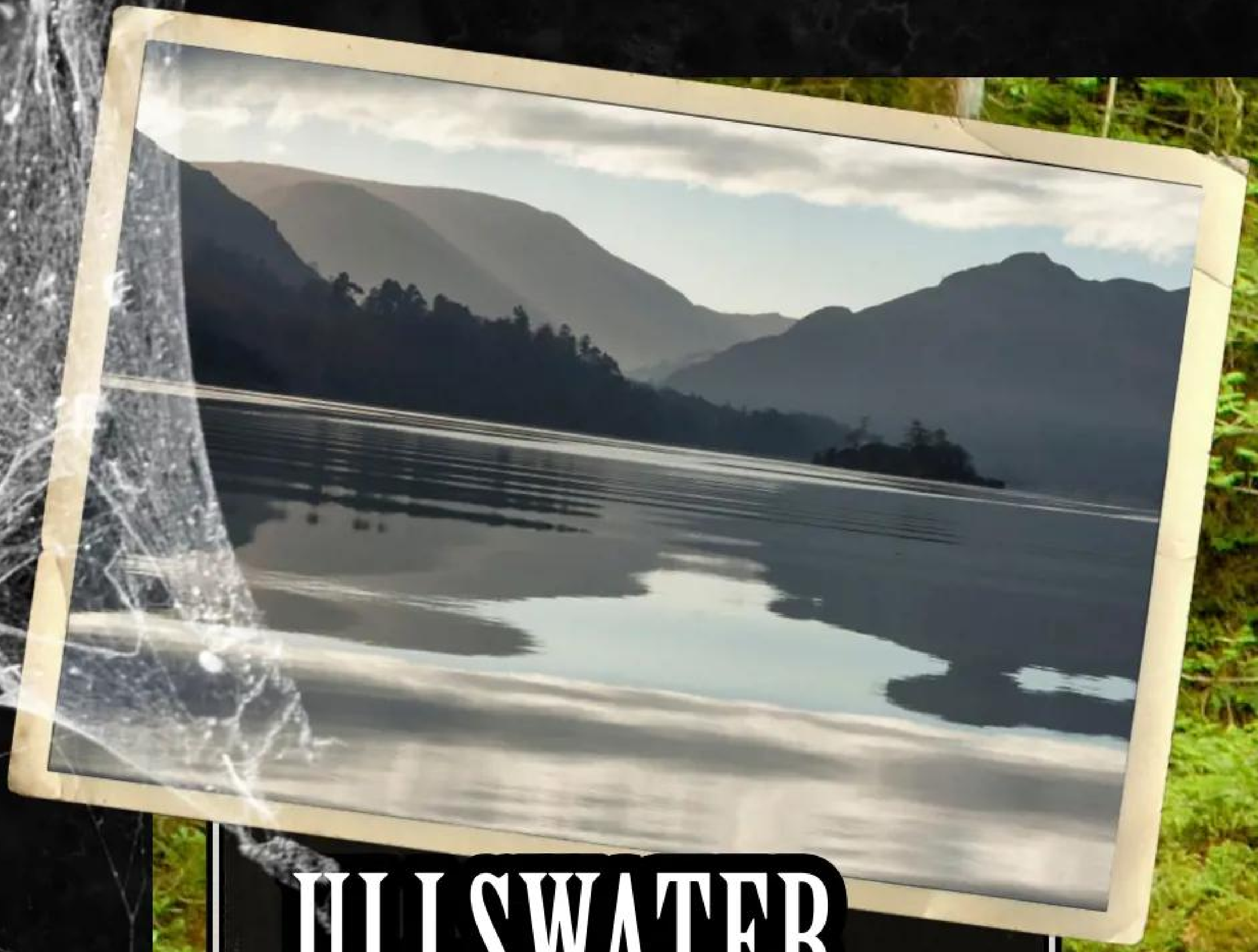
Location: Albury, England

In between the bustling towns of Dorking and Guildford lies the pretty little village of Albury. It's home to the Silent Pool, an idyllic spring-fed lake that also happens to possess a terrifying local reputation.

Ever since the 19th century, the pool has been reputed to be haunted every midnight by the ghost of a local woodcutter's daughter. The tragic girl lost her life in the 13th century, when King John cornered her on horseback as she was swimming in the pool. Terrified, the girl retreated into the water and drowned, as the heartless King simply looked on. When Albury local Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, heard what had happened, it inspired his historical revolt against the King.

AGATHA CHRISTIE AND THE SILENT POOL

When Agatha Christie went missing in 1926, her car was found abandoned at Neland Corner and there were fears that she had taken her life at the nearby Silent Pool. Happily, she was found alive and well in distant Harrogate just a few days later.



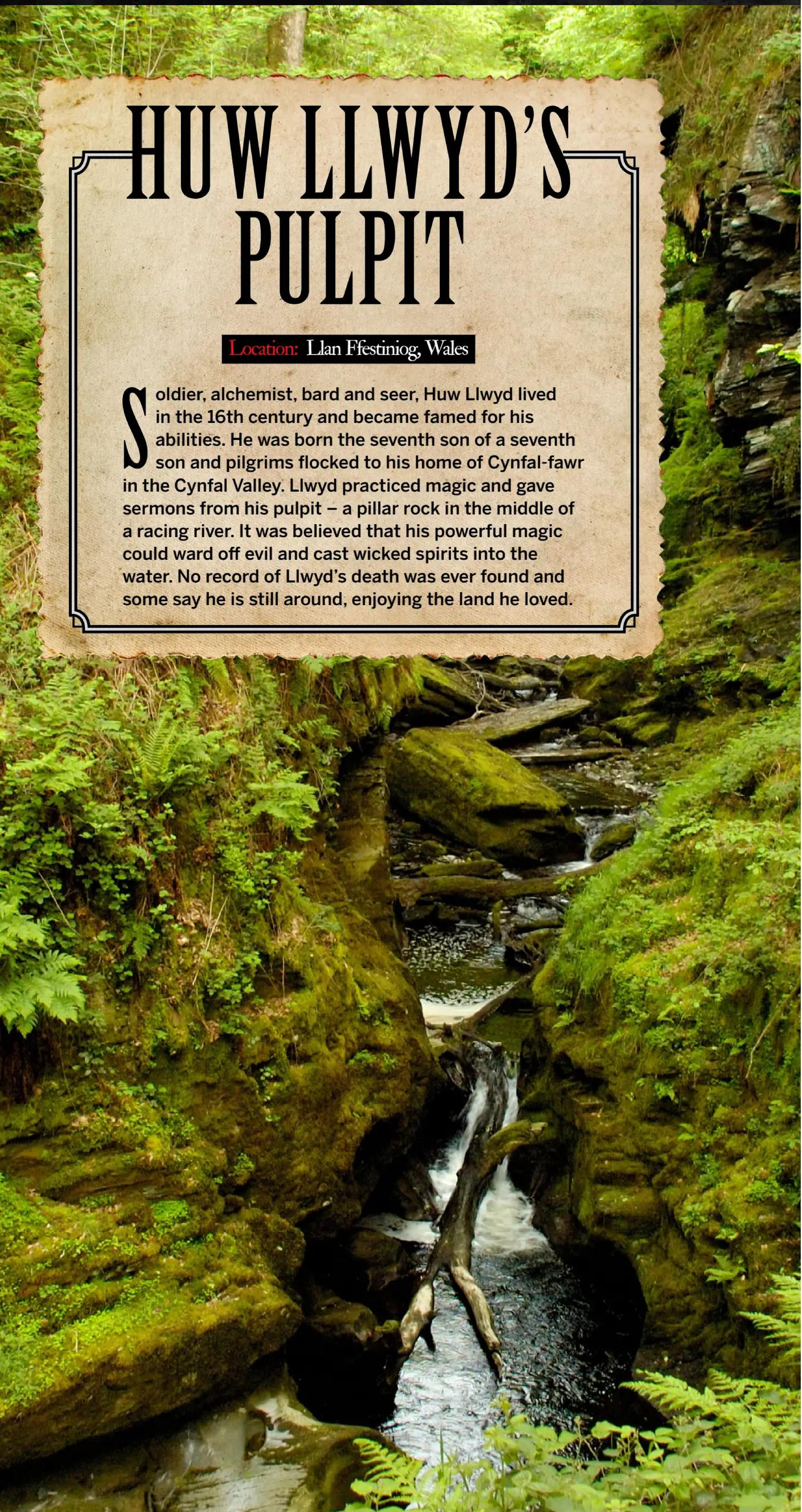
ULLSWATER

Location: Cumbria, England

The second largest of the lakes that make up the Lake District, Ullswater's silent depths have earned it the reputation as the "Dark Lake". Ullswater is deeply connected to the legend of King Arthur and for many Arthurian followers, it is the very place where the Lady of the Lake gave the magical sword, Excalibur, to Arthur. It is also reputed to be the home of the dregpike, a huge fish with a mane of jet black hair, vibrant green scales and even a pair of legs. The dregpike has supposedly preyed on locals as recently as the 20th century, attempting to drag local huntsmen from their mounts as they galloped along the shores of the lake.

THE GRAVE OF SIR TRISTRAM

According to some legends of King Arthur, one of the knights of the Round Table, Sir Tristram, made his home beside Ullswater. Local legend claims that he was buried there after his death and he is memorialised by Tristamont, a glacial mound near the lake.

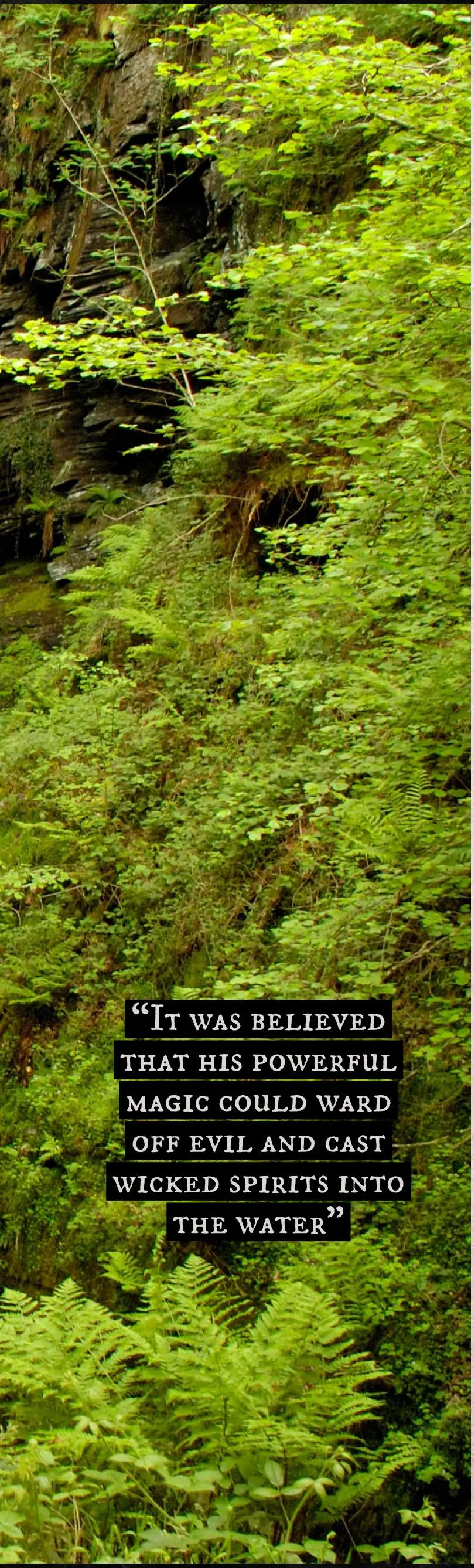


HUW LLWYD'S PULPIT

Location: Llan Ffestiniog, Wales

Soldier, alchemist, bard and seer, Huw Llwyd lived in the 16th century and became famed for his abilities. He was born the seventh son of a seventh son and pilgrims flocked to his home of Cynfal-fawr in the Cynfal Valley. Llwyd practiced magic and gave sermons from his pulpit – a pillar rock in the middle of a racing river. It was believed that his powerful magic could ward off evil and cast wicked spirits into the water. No record of Llwyd's death was ever found and some say he is still around, enjoying the land he loved.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

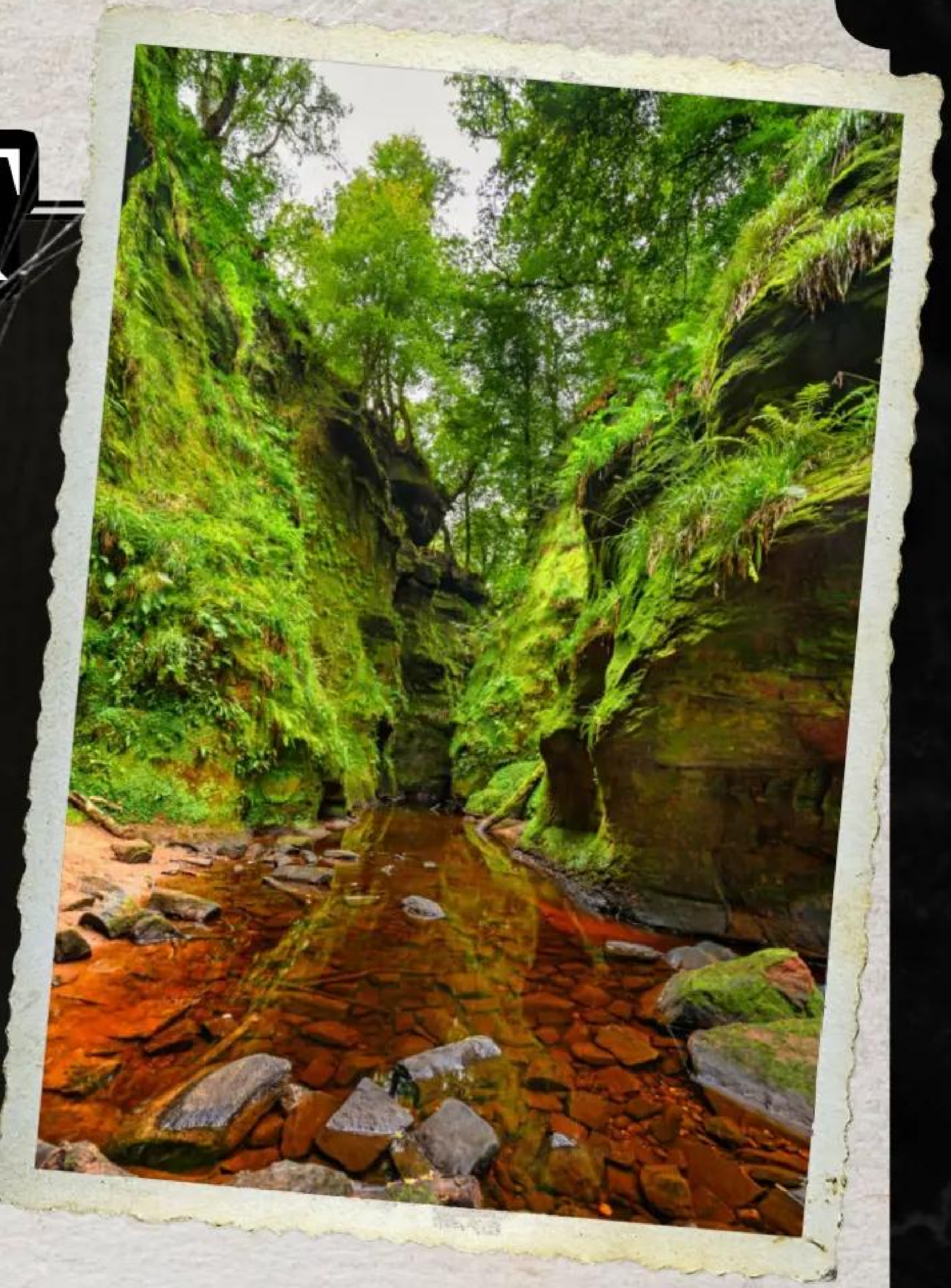


"It was believed that his powerful magic could ward off evil and cast wicked spirits into the water"

THE DEVIL'S PULPIT

Location: Loch Lomond, Scotland

At the bottom of a steep gorge not far from Loch Lomond is a river that runs blood red, thanks to the sandstone in the surrounding rocks. When the water level is low, the Devil's Pulpit is revealed, a grass-covered stone that emerges from the rock at the riverside. It is here that some say the Devil would hold court as his followers gathered to listen to his evil sermons as the river raged. For others, this is the place where Druids came to celebrate the landscape, as the waters ran red.



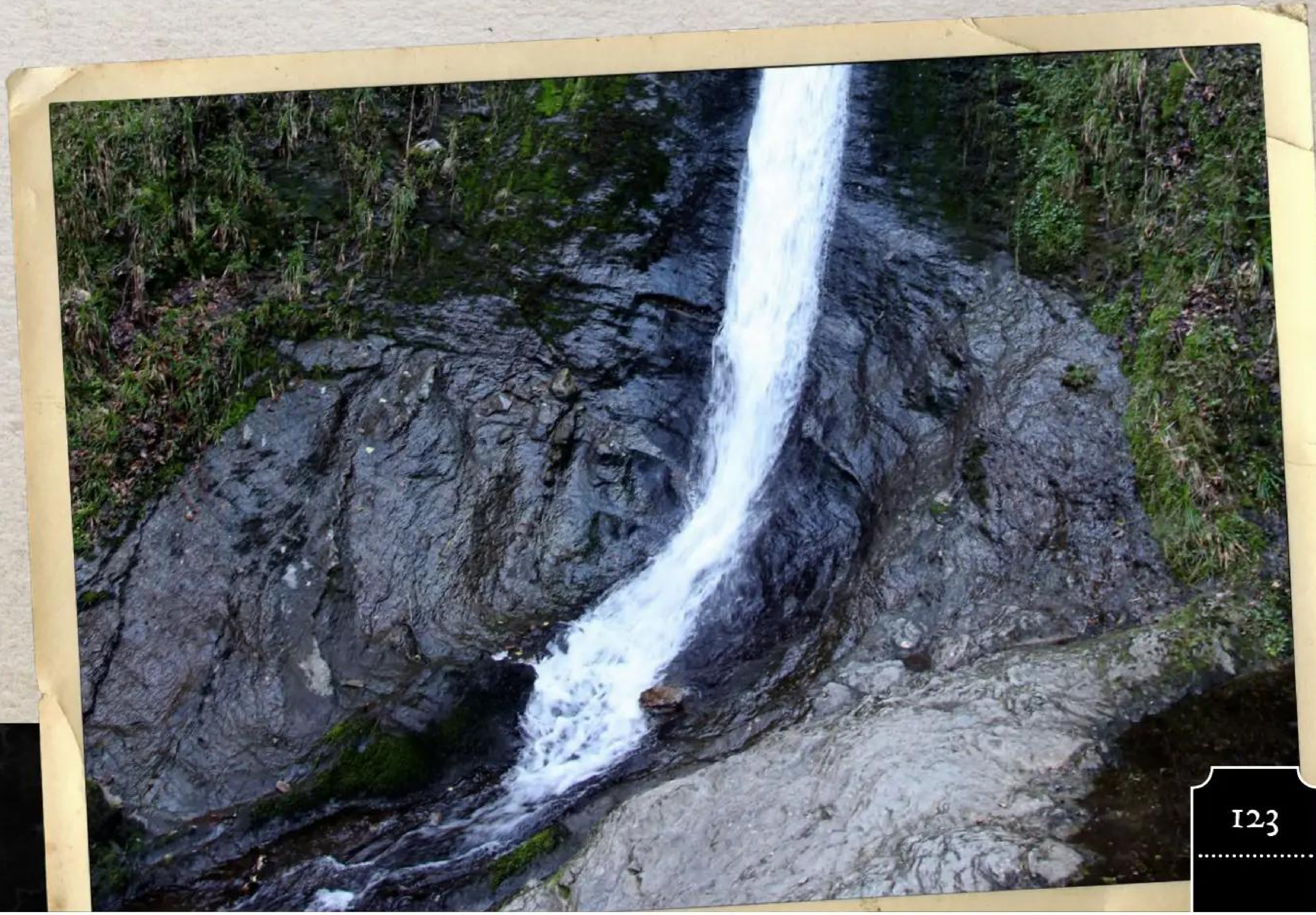
LYDFORD GORGE

Location: Dartmoor, Devon, England

Wild and mysterious, Lydford Gorge is the deepest gorge in the West Country. It echoes to the sound of the Devil's Cauldron, a natural whirlpool that sends a torrent of water gushing into a dark cavern. The ensuing tumult has given the Devil's Cauldron a fearsome reputation, as the thunder of water sounds like it is coming from the depths of hell itself. At the other end of the gorge is the White Lady Waterfall, which is reputed to be home to a ghostly white lady. Some believe that the phantom figure, who appears clad in a flowing white gown, is the spirit of the water itself and legend has it that, if someone drowning in the river Lyd catches a sight of the spectre, then their life will be spared.

THE GUBBINS OF THE GORGE

Lydford Gorge is rumoured to have been the hiding place of the Gubbins, a savage gang of outlaws led by Roger Rowle, who gave his name to the local landmark, Rowles Pool. In the 15th century the gang terrorised the area and were reputed to share all things – including their wives. Their reign of terror was eventually ended by a dubious cocktail of inbreeding and drink, with a smattering of religious conversion!



LOCH LEGENDS

North of the border, the deep, dark waters of Scottish lochs host mythical secrets, while restless spirits roam their silent shores

LOCH LOMOND

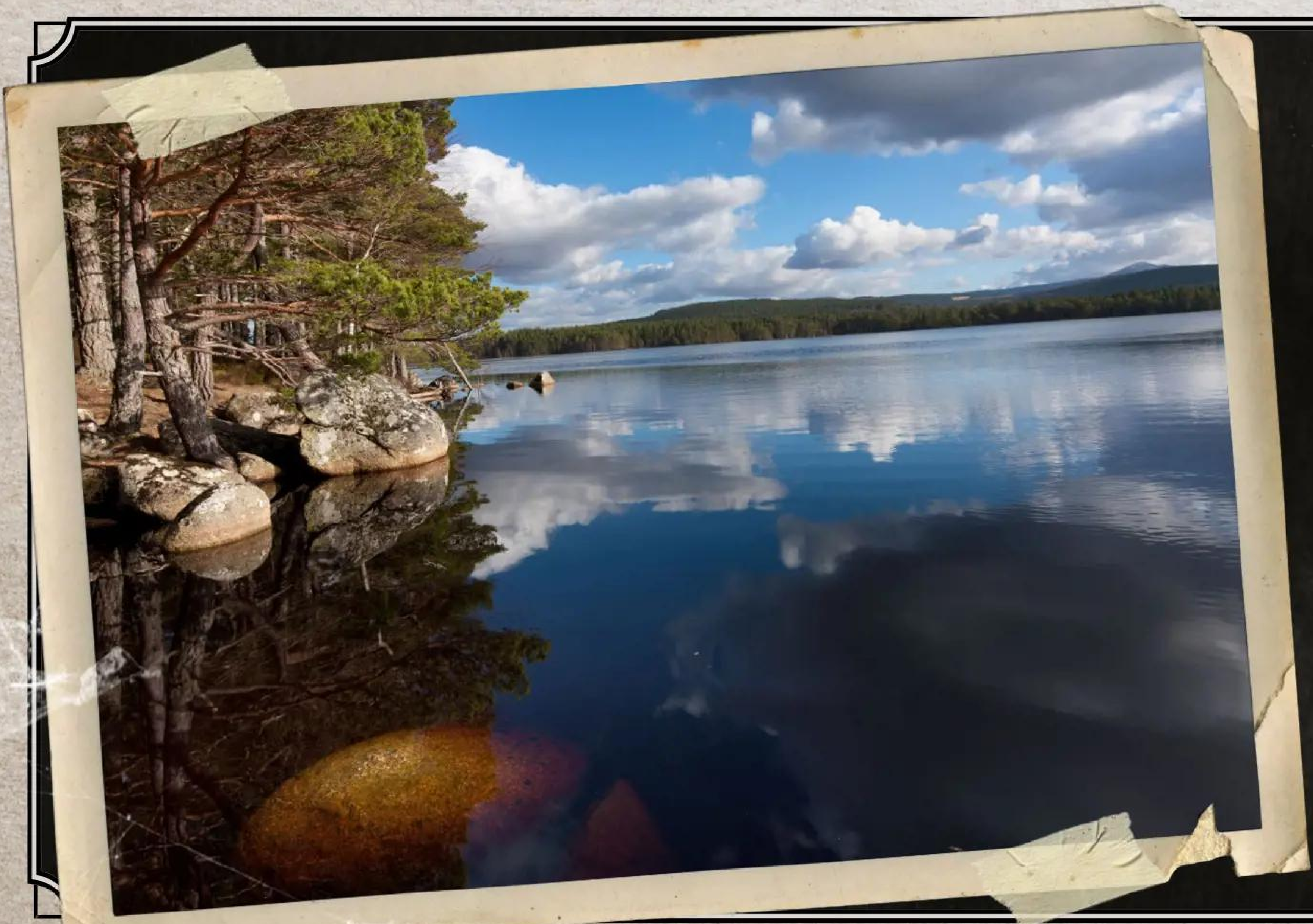
Location: West Dunbartonshire/ Argyll and Bute/ Stirling

On the shores of Loch Lomond stands Rossdhu House, now the clubhouse of Loch Lomond Golf Club. In the 18th century it was home to Sir James Colquhoun and his wife, Lady Helen, who loved the house. Today her ghost can still be glimpsed in the grounds, watching over the home she adored. Slightly less benevolent than Lady Helen is the serpentine, shapeshifting monster rumoured to reside beneath the loch's dark waters. The creature is able to appear as a water horse or other animal and delights in luring unsuspecting victims into the loch, where they meet their death by drowning.

LOCH MALLACHIE

Location: Srathspey, Scottish Highlands

Loch Mallachie is a small loch beside Loch Garten, but don't let its humble size deceive you: it is still home to a terrifying legend. Known as the 'Loch of the Curse', the shores of Mallachie are home to a bodach, or spirit, which appears to witnesses as a blazing white light. Known to some as the Old Man, the spirit's bloodcurdling banshee-like wail has been reported by terrified travellers, ringing through the night. The unearthly screech was feared as a portent of death, with tragedy always following in its wake.

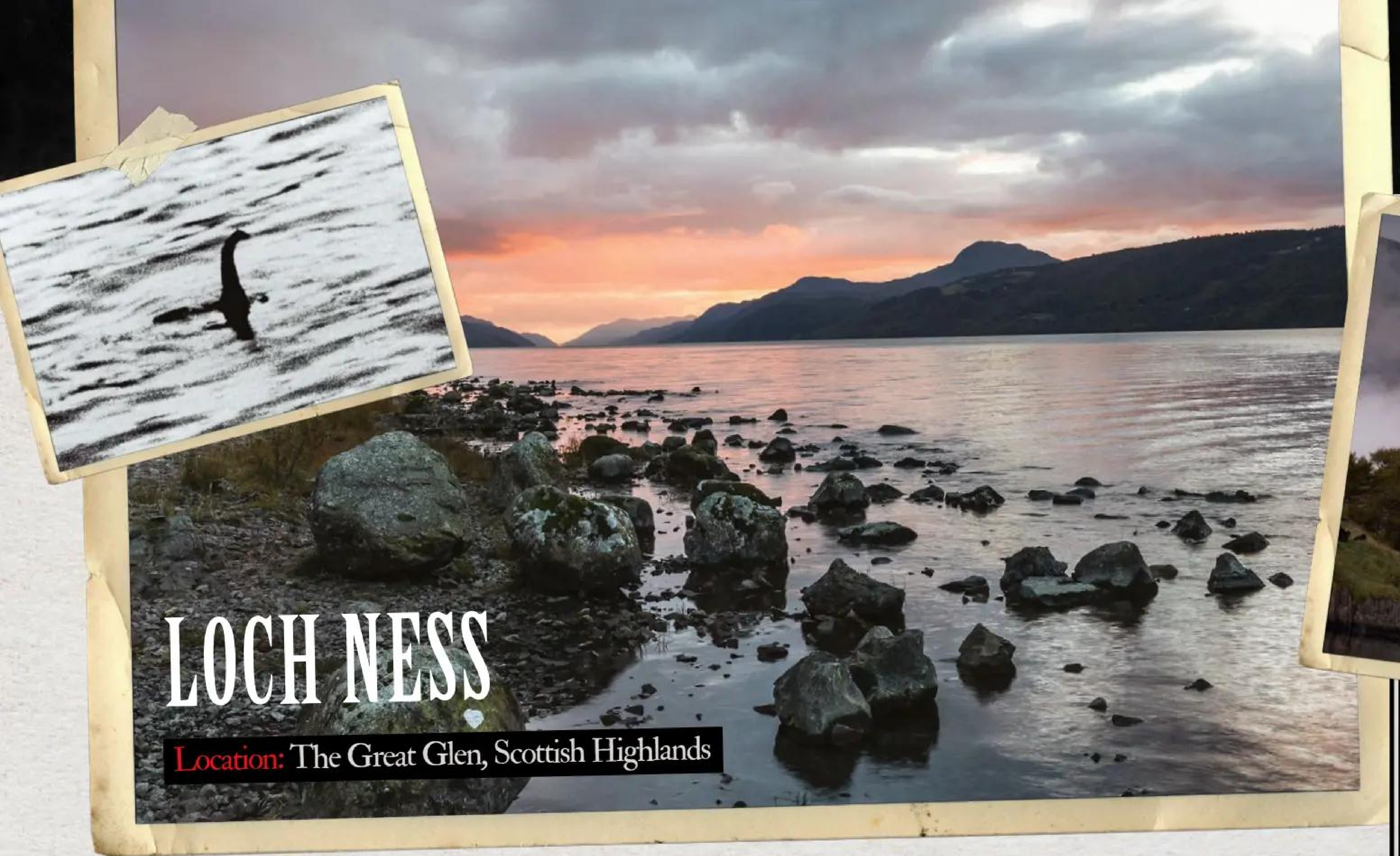


LOCH GARTEN

Location: Srathspey, Scottish Highlands

If you visit Loch Garten in the Cairngorms in the dark, keep an eye out for the monster of Loch Garten, which hunts by night. A combination of a stallion and a bull, the black-maned creature feasts on local cattle and unsuspecting children. Legend tells that a local man attempted to capture the beast, baiting a length of rope with a lamb and attaching a massive boulder to the other end, which hoped would prevent the monster from moving once it had swallowed the unfortunate bait. Instead, after eating the bait an almighty underwater struggle occurred before the monster swam away into the depths of the water, dragging the seemingly immovable boulder along with it.

Image source: Getty; Alamy; Source: Wikipedia Commons / Public Domain



LOCH NESS

Location: The Great Glen, Scottish Highlands

In January 2023, headlines were rife with news that Scotland's famous serpentine resident cryptid, affectionately known as Nessie, had been spotted in… North Carolina, USA?

Technically, given that Loch Ness – a cavern-riddled freshwater lake, partially deeper than the North Sea – is connected to the ocean, it is possible that Nessie slithered out into the Atlantic for a little holiday. But Nessie's ancestry, or very existence, stretches back to the time of St Columba in the 6th century, when she allegedly bit a local man on the leg, so it's probably a good bet that if Nessie is anywhere, it will be living large in Scotland.

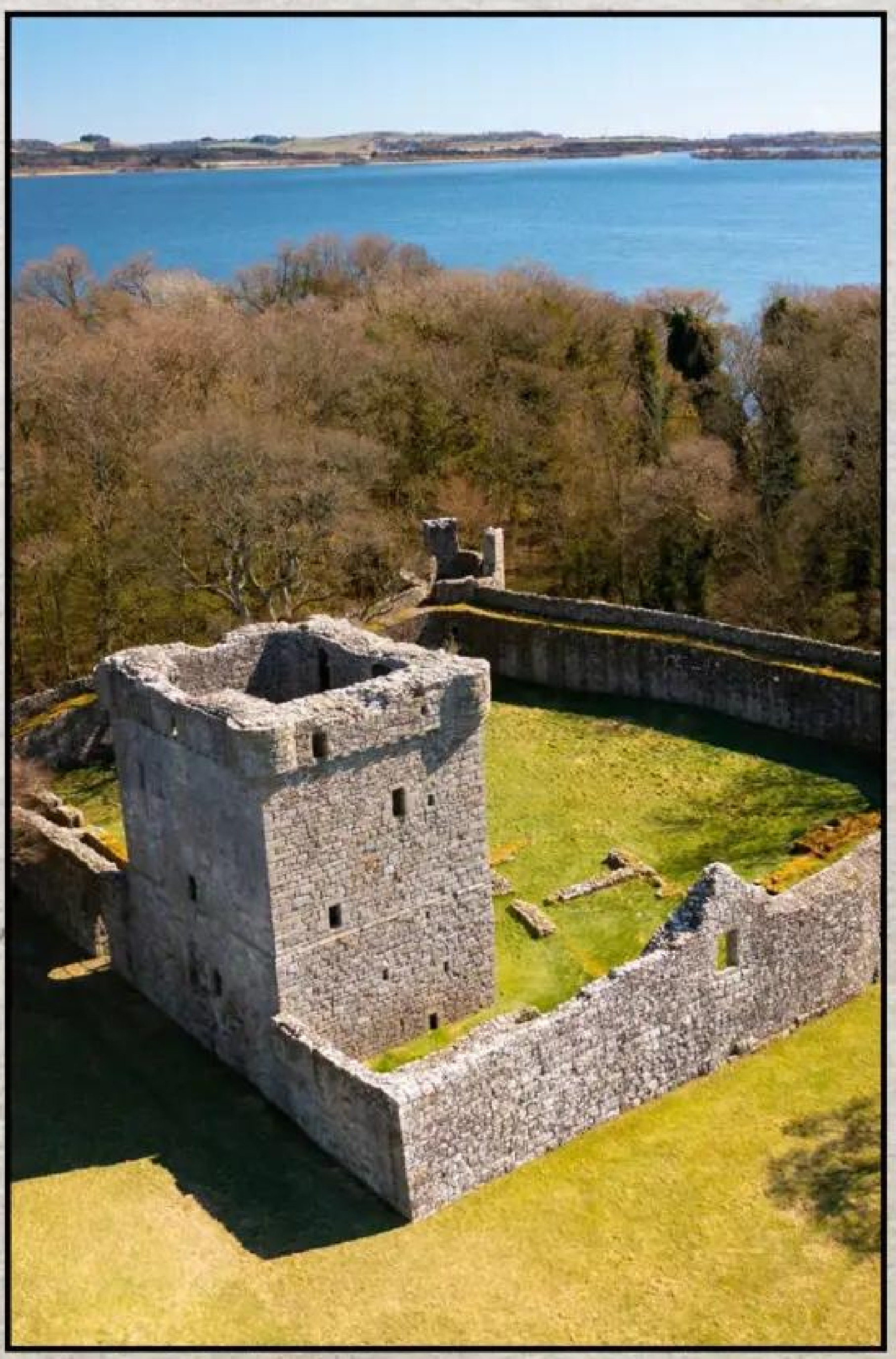
Get briefed on the latest intel on the beastie at the Drumnadrochit Loch Ness Centre and Nessieland theme park, before taking a specialised monster-hunting cruise. Or you can hang back for a luxury stay at the allegedly cursed Urquhart Castle with a pair of binoculars, while rubbing shoulders with its numerous resident spooks as you hunt for one of the world's most notorious supernatural lake monsters.

> "Hang back for a stay at the allegedly cursed Urquhart Castle, while rubbing shoulders with its numerous resident spooks"

LOCH LEVEN

Location: Kinross, Perth

Loch Leven, in central Scotland, has a rich history; on its shores stands Lochleven Castle, where Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned in 1566. She made her escape with the help of castle resident Willie Douglas, who stole a set of keys and threw them into the loch after she was safe. When the loch was lowered in the 19th century, a set of old keys was discovered beneath the water. Mary's ghost is reputed to walk the ruins, grieving for the twins she miscarried after she was poisoned during her imprisonment. They were laid to rest in the castle grounds.



EILEAN MUNDE

Location: Loch Leven, Kinross, Perth

In the waters of Loch Leven sits the uninhabited island of Eilean Mundae, the secluded site of a graveyard used by the clans Stewart, MacDonald and Cameron. Among the residents are casualties of the Glencoe Massacre. A local witch, Corrag, predicted the massacre of Glencoe but found her warnings ignored. She was afforded a resting place on the island after her death but a storm forced her burial at Ballachulish instead. On the island sits the chapel built by Saint Fintan Munnu, who travelled to mainland Scotland from Iona in the 17th century; the chapel has not celebrated a service since 1653, while the last burial on Eilean Munde took place as recently as 1972.

THE GHOSTS OF GLENCOE

The vengeful spirits of the MacDonalds, slain in the Glencoe Massacre, are reputed to return to the glen where they died on the anniversary of the slaughter. More cheerful are the Marriage Trees, two linden trees that have entwined on the third fairway of the Woodlands Golf Course. Supposedly planted by a happy couple, a kiss between the trees will bestow a lifetime of happiness.

MAGICAL & MACABRE MUSEUMS

Explore the UK's never-ending fascination with death and the paranormal, permanently preserved and on display for all to see!

All museums have a few skeletons in their closet, especially the most mainstream institutions. If they aren't displaying the ancient bones of warriors or primitive ritualistic pottery devoted to pagan deities, they're showing morbid medicinal implements or extinct animal taxidermy. And if it's not part of their exhibit, you can guarantee the collections below hold some sinister secrets. In fact, many of the most famous and highly regarded museums have their own ghosts or even curses – the price they pay when acquiring archaic artefacts.

Venture to the British Museum, situated in the heart of London, and you will find the Unlucky Mummy – a coffin lid dating back over 1000 years that is said to cause death and destruction to all those who own it. Rumour has it that it even caused the sinking of the Titanic. The museum is also home to numerous ghosts, including that of a dog.

Just a stone's throw away, at the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum, you can have a gander at the Great Bed of Ware, but don't dare take a nap on this gigantic four-poster cot – unless you are of royal blood – as commoners won't last the night.

And across the road at the Natural History Museum, the Cursed Amethyst is held in the vault. Its curse is so powerful that its previous owner stowed it away in seven locked boxes within a bank vault. It was given to the museum in 1941, with a letter advising them to throw it in the sea.

In Nottingham, numerous ghosts are said to be imprisoned at the National Justice Museum. Formerly known as the Galleries of Justice, this imposing building was used for law enforcement purposes for over 600 years, beginning with the Normans in 1375 and ending as a police station from 1905 and courtroom until 1986. Beneath the former jailhouse is a network of tunnels that may have been used for imprisonment and punishment as early as 600 CE. It was the only place in the UK where you could be jailed, sentenced and executed all under the same roof, so it is no suprise that the premises is teeming with restless spirits.

Meanwhile, in Wales, St Fagans National Museum of History in Cardiff is said to be the country's most haunted museum. The former Welsh Folk Museum boasts a large collection of historic buildings, all meticulously relocated, brick-by-brick to the site – itself within the grounds of a haunted Elizabethan mansion. The ghosts of each relocated building are believed to still linger, despite the move. Up in Yorkshire, Thirsk Museum – a small local history museum – holds Busby's stoop chair, a cursed stool that will bring misfortune to anyone who sits on it.

But while numerous museums play host to a plethora of phenomena, they often only share their supernatural secrets at Halloween. So, if you're looking to dig a little deeper into Britain's haunted history at any time of year, venture to one of our picks with a particular passion for all things both peculiar and paranormal…

CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

The earliest 'museums' were called "cabinets of curiosities", or "rooms of wonder". Dating back to the 17th century, these were collections of notable objects including natural wonders (sometimes faked, such as the Fiji mermaid, a baby monkey sewn to the back half of a fish), historical relics or antiquities and works of art. Often these collections were compiled by wealthy individuals, members of the merchant class and early scientists. They focused on curiosity, as the name suggests – displaying peculiar objects that inspired conversation, avoiding any explanations or insight – unlike a modern day museum. After an initial boom, over the course of the 19th century, these 'curiosities' became thought of as 'vulgar', misleading objects of study, and the popularity of the cabinets declined. Obscure objects found a new home in freakshows and sideshows; and as museums devoted themselves to facts and evidence, rather than curiosities and conjecture, academic collections became the norm. Many grew into reputable institutions, such as Oxford's Ashmolean Museum.

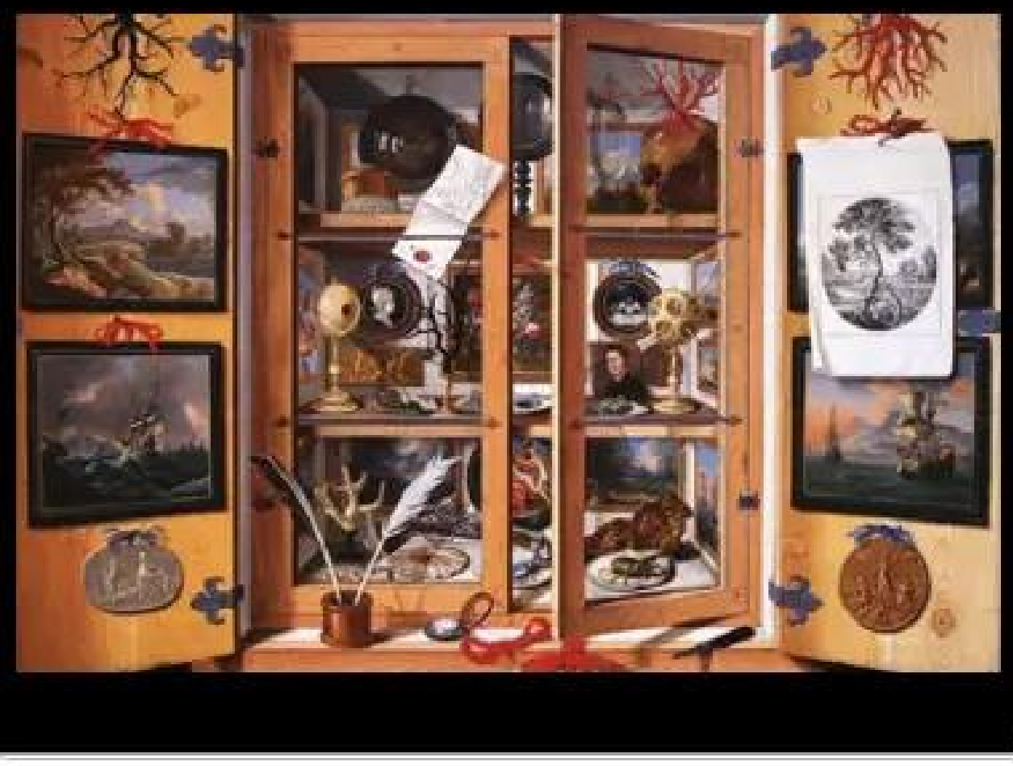


Image source: Getty; Alamy;

THE MUSEUM OF CURIOSITIES

Location: Nottingham, England

Husband and wife Steve and Marie Wilson opened the museum when they found their collection of haunted and supernatural objects would no longer fit in their home. Whether you're a fan of horror films, ghosts or the paranormal, there is something for you here if you dare enter. The museum claims to have more than 1000 haunted objects, including a Victorian hearse which has been reported to have moved on its own on a few occasions. Many visitors have reported having felt an otherworldly presence of someone or something in the room with them.

THE HAUNTED ANTIQUES PARANORMAL RESEARCH CENTRE

Location: Hinckley, England

Home to the first paranormal research centre in the UK, nothing in this museum is behind glass as the owners want to encourage guests to pick up objects and try to experience a connection with the ghostly world; allegedly every item in the collection has a particular spirit attached and their own unique histories. Ghost hunts, paranormal investigations and escape rooms can all be arranged and experienced inside this otherwise unassuming building in Hinckley, Leicestershire.

Image source: Getty; Alamy;Wikipedia Commons/ Bensisto/ Miahaite

THE MUSEUM OF WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC

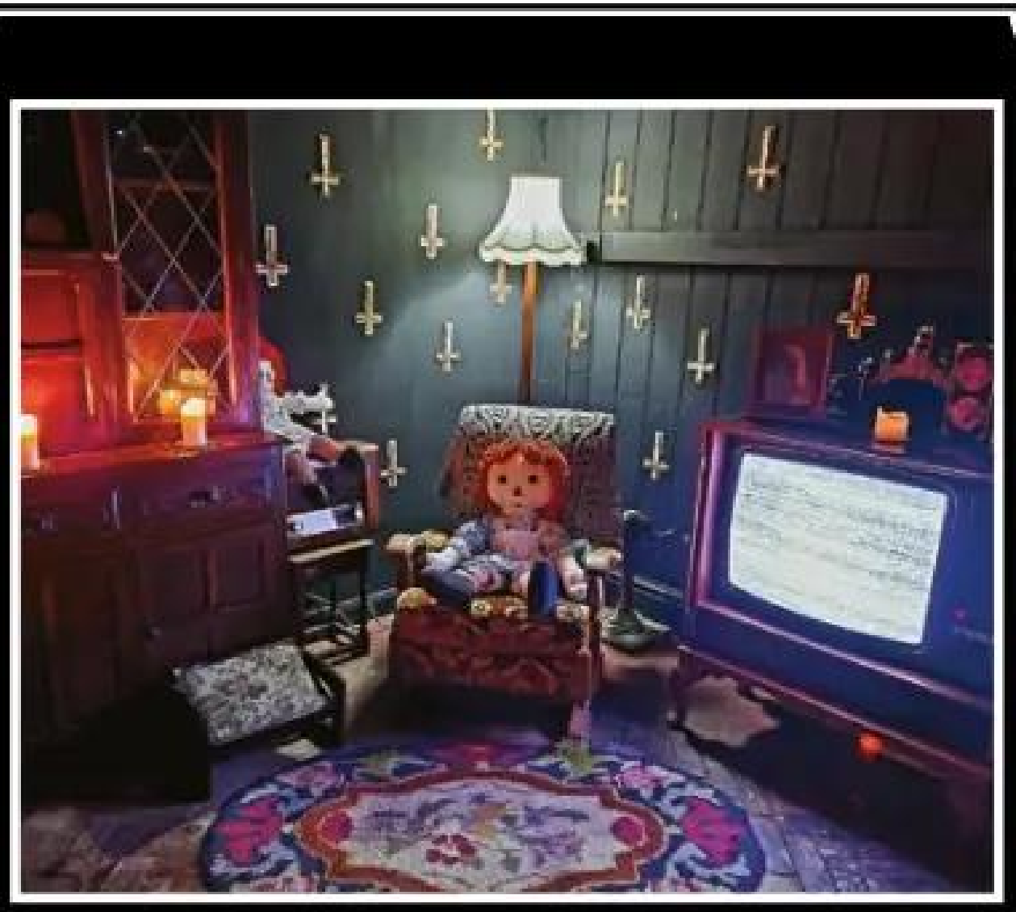
Location: Boscastle, England

Founded originally on the Isle of Man by magician Cecil Williamson in the 1950s from items in his personal collection, the museum was purchased by Wiccan Geralf Gardner and moved to Boscastle, Cornwall in the 70s. Inside you'll find exhibits on Britain's history with witchcraft including a recreation of a 19th century witch's cottage. Items inside have been donated by prominent figures in the world of witchcraft in the hope of representing the subject as authentically and respectfully as possible. There are 3000 objects and 7000 books inside for you to explore and witness.

VIKTOR WYND'S MUSEUM OF CURIOSITIES

Location: London, England

Viktor Wynd's museum is a physical representation of his eccentric mind. As such, it's a cluttered and often incoherent experience of eclectic and fascinating items from Fiji mermaids and shrunken heads to McDonalds Happy Meal toys and dodo bones. The museum keeps nothing behind closed doors, displaying every oddity. And what's more, you can enjoy it all while sipping on absinthe!



THE HAUNTED MUSEUM & SPIRIT SHOP

Location: Stoke-On-Trent, England

Despite being relatively young, having only opened in 2021, this museum has made a splash for having numerous unexplained paranormal activities caught on camera. If you're looking for a museum with practical exhibits, the Haunted Museum has plenty on offer. Brave visitors can get up close and personal with torture chairs, straitjackets, coffins and even a used slab from a morgue. Tours, ghost hunts, seances, sleepovers, tarot readings and workshops are all held in the building. Admission is for over 18s only.

YES
ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890
GOOD BYE

BAPTIST
PENUEL
CHAPEL
PENUEL

ROWTON'S MUSEUM OF THE PARANORMAL AND SPIRITUALITY

Location: Carmarthen, Wales

In 2024, nine years after British-born Laura Rowton and her American husband Erik Rowton set up their popular YouTube channel, The Paranormal Scholar, the couple bought an 18th century Welsh chapel complete with schoolroom and graveyard. Penuel Chapel, a historic building in the town of Carmarthen in South Wales, was said to be the site of miraculous faith healings performed by Reverend WS Jones, who led the congregation until 1904. Understandably, the duo of seasoned paranormal investigators found this supernatural space the perfect setting to showcase all of the occult objects they have acquired over the years. As well as exhibiting relics related to saints and demons in the chapel's main sanctuary, you can view paranormally active artifacts in the schoolroom or visit the Victorian séance parlour, where regular séance evenings are held, to explore 19th century mourning customs and interact with an antique ouija board. The museum also hosts paranormal investigations, talks and workshops on the supernatural.

MUSEUM OF MAGIC, FORTUNE-TELLING & WITCHCRAFT

Location: Edinburgh, Scotland

Inspired by the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic in Boscastle, Edinburgh's Museum of Magic, Fortune-telling & Witchcraft was founded in 2023 – a year after Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon issued a formal apology on behalf of the Scottish government for the historic injustice of the witch trials – in order to honor the country's rich and complex history of witchcraft and wise women. The museum, nestled in the heart of Edinburgh – just off Royal Mile – boasts unique artefacts such as the world's oldest ouija board and highlights Scotland's rich folklore and magical past. You can explore the museum at your leisure, or delve deeper by embarking on a combined museum tour and walking excursion into the streets of Edinburgh to discover more about the city's cunning folk and dark past (available every weekend). The museum also offers tarot readings and hosts events including Weekly Witchy Film Nights, talks and workshops.

Image source: Getty; Alamy; Wikipedia commons/ Ronincmc

THE TRAVELLER'S GUIDE TO

PARANORMAL BRITAIN

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PARANORMAL BRITAIN

THIS SCEPTRED ISLE

For centuries Britain has been a rich crossroads of myth and legend, which has coalesced into a unique relationship with the strange and paranormal

THE CELTIC REVIVAL

STORIED BRITANNIA

Discover the UK's undying love for all things otherwordly

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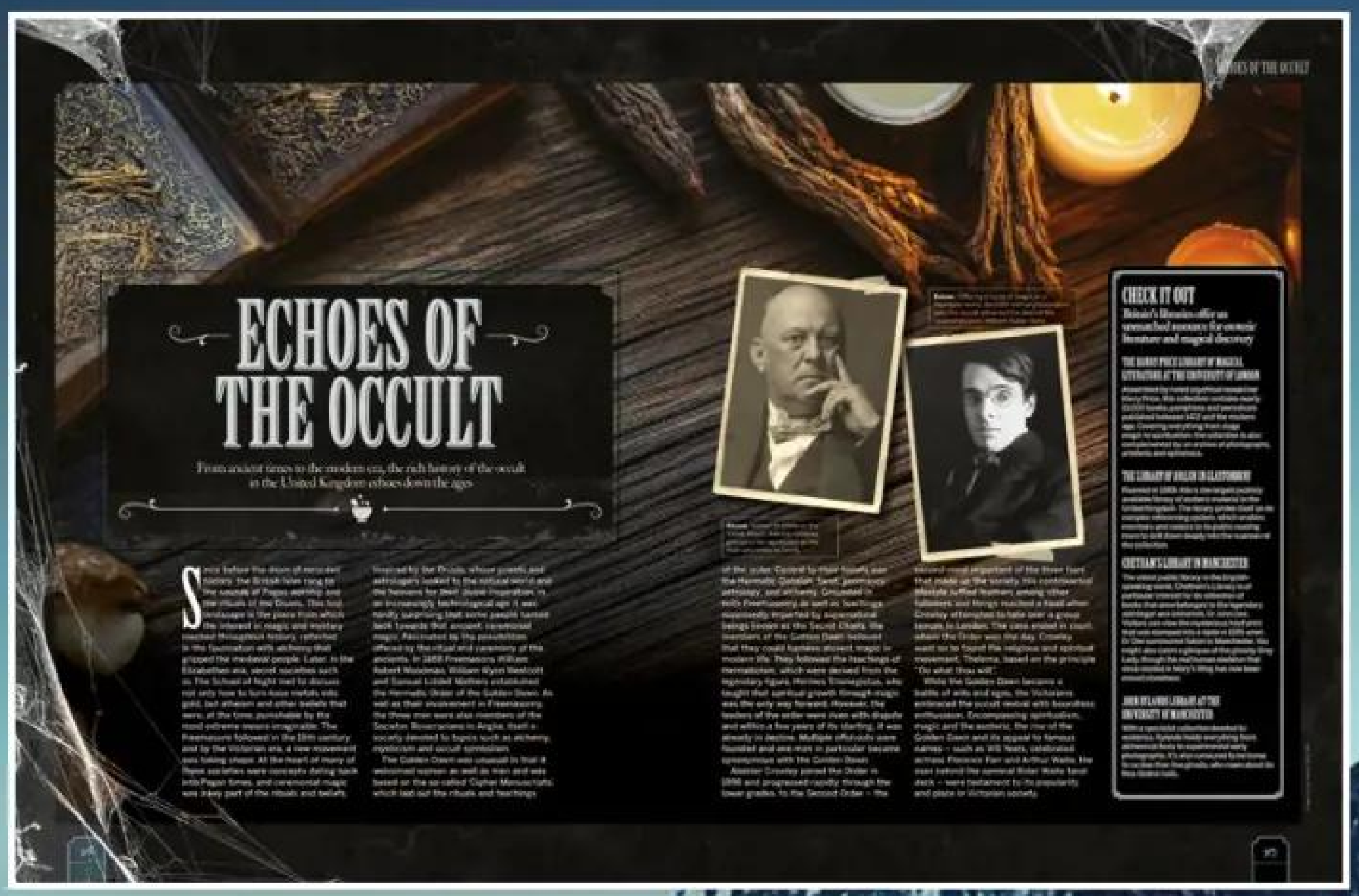
HAUNTED HERITAGE

Historic landmarks that are home to more than meets the eye



ECHOES OF THE OCCULT

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MADE BY MAGIC

How witchcraft, alchemy, sorcery and the occult arts have shaped the British Isles

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"Dee is believed to have conjured up a demon to create the British Empire from a stone circle on the Isle of Dogs"

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